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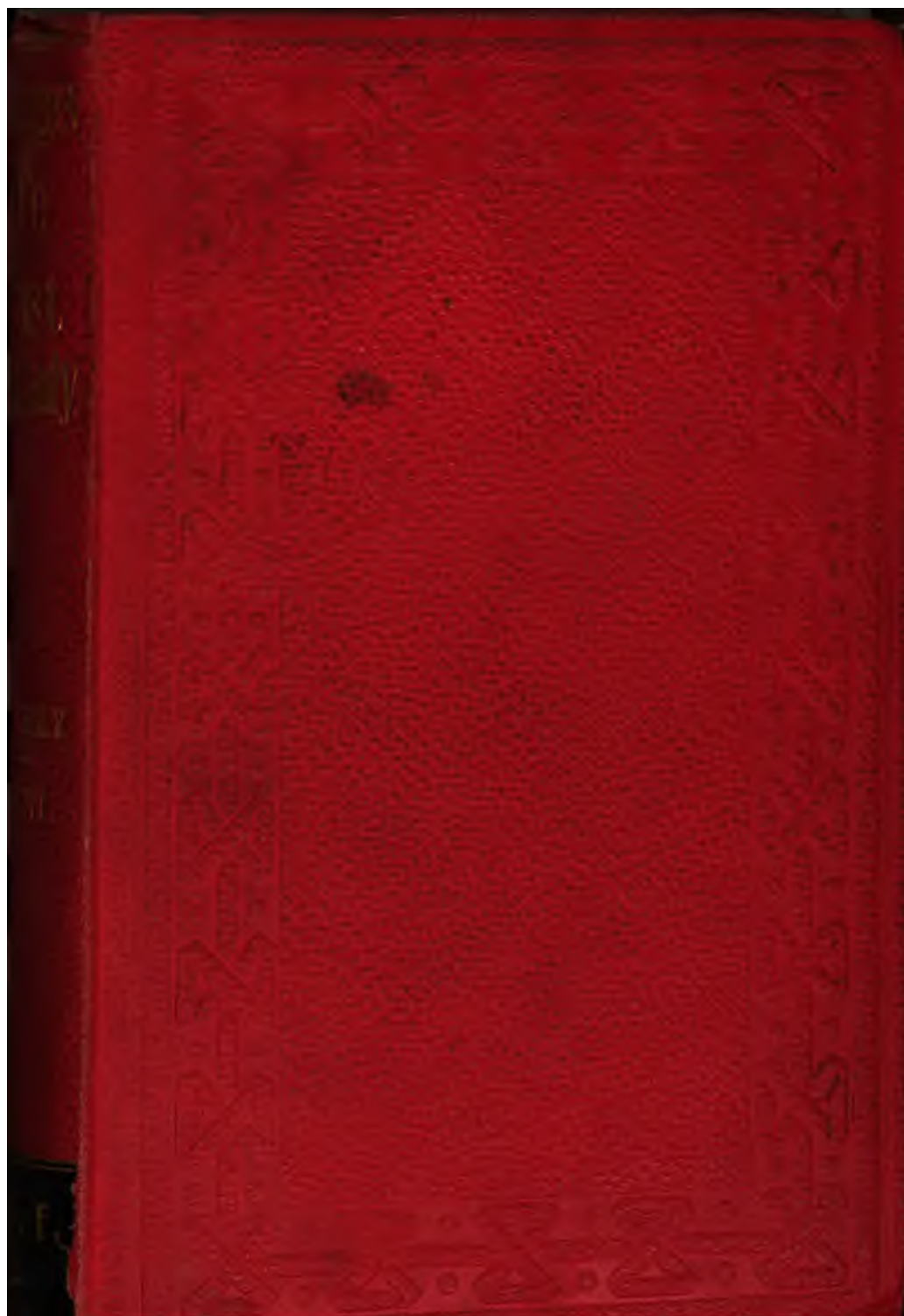
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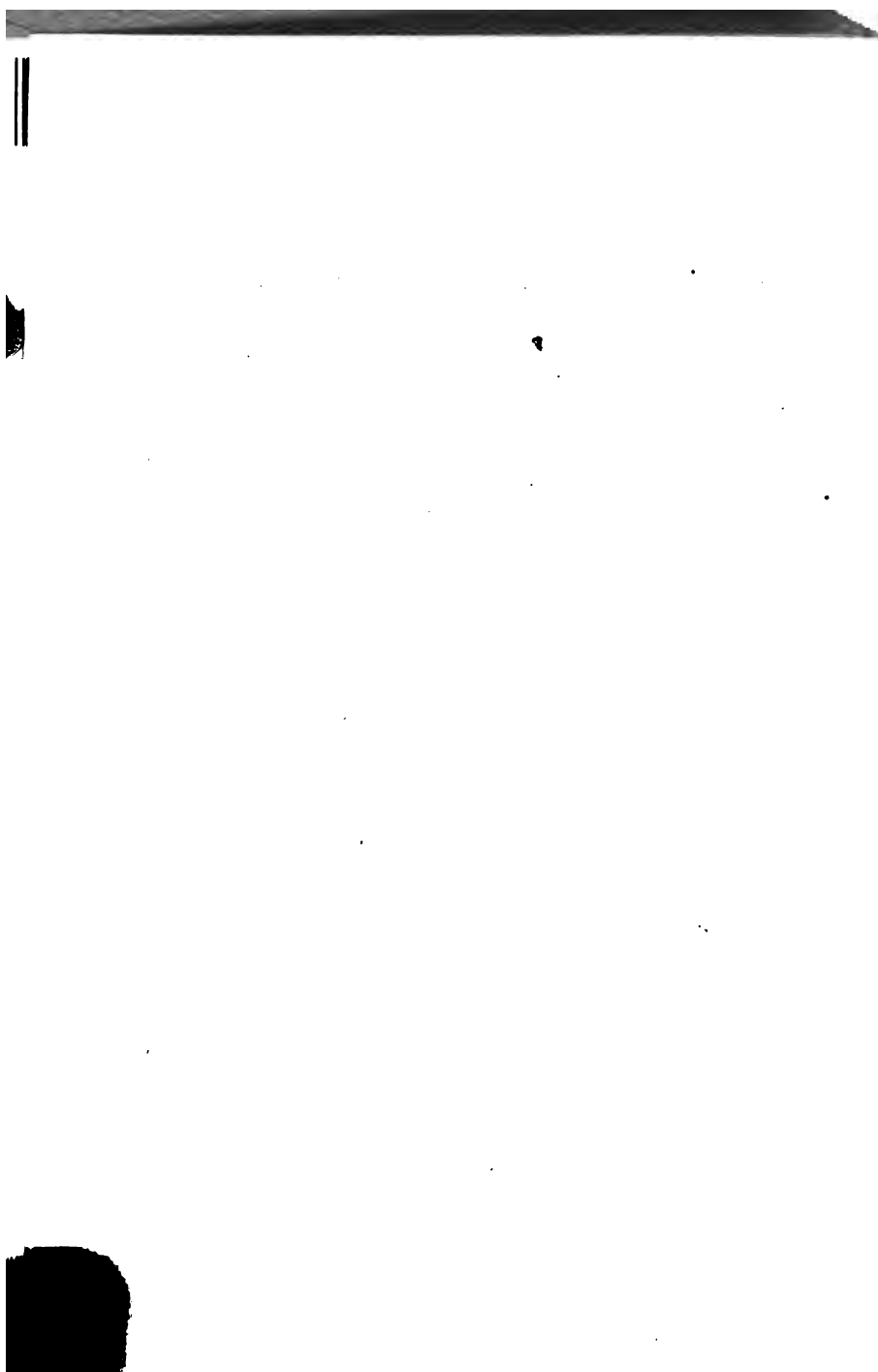


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PASSAGES IN THE LIFE
OF
A FAST YOUNG LADY.

BY
MRS. GREY,
AUTHOR OF "THE GAMBLER'S WIFE," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
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NEW-STREET SQUARE



PASSAGES
IN THE
LIFE OF A FAST YOUNG LADY.

CHAPTER I.

Two girls are sauntering in a pretty sequestered walk, through a wood adjoining the pleasure-grounds of Everslee.

One is fair and pale, unpretending in all ways—a black straw hat of no very becoming shape, and a little grey cloak of a light texture over her black dress, and a large basket on her arm. The other, a dazzling creature to look upon — the smallest of hats perched upon her luxuriant, soft, dark hair; a jacket of a very knowing cut gracing her shoulders; and her dress, also of black, tucked up, so as

to display not only a radiant petticoat of gaudy colours, but an exquisite foot and ankle, *chaussée* in boots with the highest heels possible, and most plentifully decorated with little brass rings.

She walked impatiently before her sister in the narrow pathway, humming a tune; but to look at her face, bright as it might seem to a casual observer, there was, nevertheless, a cloud upon her brow—a dissatisfied expression upon the rosy mouth.

“How very smart and gay you look, Car, for this quiet walk. And your deep mourning!—why, you are sufficiently well dressed for Hyde Park. What a pity there is nobody to see you in this becoming costume!” was the quiet sister’s remark.

“Gerry,” Car exclaimed, stopping short and turning round, facing her companion, “these are the only sensible words I ever heard uttered by your silly lips. Yes,” she continued, her eyes flashing; “why indeed do I take the trouble of dressing or doing

anything else here, in this thrice horrid place, this country home which I hate and detest," — her favourite expression,—"and which, I can tell you, I will not stand much longer?"

"Oh, Car, I wonder at you; I like it so very much, and should be so happy here if mamma was only better and happier, and you more contented."

"You idiot as you always were, or, I suppose I ought rather to say, you excellent worthy creature, the idol of all, the saint and martyr of your neighbours, and acquaintances, the Lady Bountiful of the village, the purloiner of broken meat, and old clothes! Upon my word, Miss Geraldine, the way you watch me when I am eating my luncheon, sitting as you do ready to pounce upon my plate, should I fortunately leave a bone unpicked, makes me quite nervous; and the daggers you look, should I by ill-luck fancy a bit of pudding you have set your heart upon transferring into that basket of yours."

"Oh, Car," said Geraldine, laughing, "you

don't know what good those scraps do—how glad the poor people are to get them; and really, I am quite sure you would be interested if you were to come with me sometimes into the cottages.”

“Geraldine, you are more than ever idiotic. I know you don't mind my calling you so, dear; it is not because I don't think you are a really good little wretch, but it is my way of designating your queer doings, for you are certainly idiotic,—that is to say, in my sense of the word.”

“But, Car, I really do not at all see the sense of the comparison,” Geraldine answered, rather in a piqued tone of voice.

“Well, now, I'll tell you what I mean. Any one who can imagine there can be any enjoyment beyond the pale of the gay world, appears, to my mind, one bereft of sense, and consequently must be an idiot; and to see you just as, or rather far more, happy in this dreadful place, quite satisfied to drudge at home and go into those dirty

cottages, where people are often sick and in their fusty beds, and to pass Sunday after Sunday, in teaching those uninteresting brats, seems to me either the act of a lunatic or an idiot. *I go with you into a cottage! No, thank you; I don't like the looks of cottagers, except forming a *tableau* in a ballet, when they look so picturesque in their pretty dresses and straw hats,—the picture of cleanliness. Defend me from *bonâ fide* beggars, all rags and—we won't say what!"*

Geraldine sighed in silence. She again followed her sister, who stalked on with a sort of defiant air. It was no use, she well knew, to argue the point with her. They had now left the wood, and were threading some fields leading to the village.

"Well," groaned Car, as some labouring men passed, and, attracted by her showy appearance, stared rudely, "there go some men, at any rate; it's even refreshing to see *male* clodhoppers; anything's better than

eternal women and children; and, I declare, here comes another *he creature*, that youth with the white choke—Mr. Hale, the curate. Well, *faute de mieux*, I shall attack him! Oh, how he amused me at church last Sunday!”

“Oh, pray, Car, don’t!” interposed Geraldine: “the poor man is so shy.”

“Well, what do I care? So much the better; it will be some excitement in this dull hole to give him a few instructions to ‘teach his young ideas how to shoot,’ and how to behave himself in the company of pretty ladies. But, oh, good gracious! what a Guy the man is!”

Poor Mr. Hale! What an ordeal for him to have to encounter, at some short distance, the approach of the two Miss Eversfields. There was no escape for him; no by-path into which he could turn to get out of their way; the hedge was too high and too impervious either to jump over or creep through. No, there was no alternative but

to face the young ladies; and oh, poor man! he had before looked upon the bright, flaunting Car, and those eyes of hers had already been too much for his weak mind — had caused him to blunder even in the reading-desk.

Yes, the agonies the young man had to endure — shy by nature; having for the first time to make his *début* in that country church; the square pew of Everslee exactly opposite to the reading-desk; five pair of young ladies' eyes, not including the governess's, pertinaciously fixed upon his face; and one pair amongst them — oh! what a commotion *they* made in the young curate's heart!

Mr. Hale was fair-complexioned, with a colour which agitation always heightened to nearly a purple hue, his ears (seeming to catch fire from his cheeks) burning with a crimson flame.

We pity him sincerely, and have often marvelled how shy young men, fresh to the

duties of the pulpit, have the moral courage to get over their first initiation, having to face a merciless assemblage; the nervous feeling which even the sound of their own voices must occasion in that unaccustomed place, alone must be an ordeal; and then to be the mark for every eye to fix upon; yes, every eye in the sacred edifice, whether it may be small or large, directed at once,—and then usually fixed, whether it may be in earnest attention, or deep reverie, on the face of the perhaps naturally bashful young beginner; for, from whatever cause it may arise, whether devotion or absence of mind, certainly the officiating clergyman has generally the benefit of the fixed stare of the largest portion of the congregation.

Car saw at once how it fared with the new curate, and, mischievous girl as she always was, delighted in the discovery. A victim at once stood before her: something (though indeed it was but a *pis aller*) to give her a little sport.

"Yes, I'll hook that shy fish," she thought. "What a goose of a man he looks!" she continued to muse, as she fixed her eyes steadily upon the curate, who felt their gaze penetrating his every fibre, although he tried not to look that way; but it was easy to perceive that his face became deeper and deeper dyed, his ears more and more fiery red, and, perhaps fortunately to avert a fit of apoplexy, the perspiration starting from every pore, necessitating a frequent mopping of his forehead.

But still the inexorable Car continued to stare on, and the curate to falter, stammer, perspire, and make such blunders that a less indulgent rector than Mr. Brooke would have at once pronounced him quite inadequate to the post he had to fill as his curate. But he received compassionately the excuses which the agitated young man poured forth after the service was over, and that afternoon quite retrieved his reputation, for Car Eversfield was not in the

family pew. She had had enough, she said, of church for one day.

Mr. Hale would this afternoon have passed the young ladies with only a bow, but was not permitted. Car stopped short, — they had been previously introduced to him by the rector,—and now began in her most insinuating manner to talk to the young man, saying everything that came uppermost in her mind; even adding (false one as she was), “Mr. Hale, I was quite delighted with your voice in reading the service on Sunday.”

“Oh, Miss Eversfield, I fear you are only joking. I am quite aware how badly I did the duty; but, to confess the truth, I really felt unaccountably nervous.”

“Oh, yes; I could see that. I watched you throughout the whole service with much interest, Mr. Hale. A first appearance on any stage (forgive me the expression — it is not, I fear, quite clerical) must always be a trial; but the intonation of a voice can never be mistaken.”

Mr. Hale was, indeed, in for it now. He had been going in quite another direction on parish business, but soon all that was forgotten, and he turned back and was walking towards the village with the two girls, Car, in high spirits, doing her best to precipitate the young man fathom deep into the gulf of destruction to peace of mind, into which she so gloried in plunging her victims, no matter who or what they might be, and she followed it up to the full in this mad scheme of amusement *pour le moment*; Geraldine, the sober-minded, quiet, modest sister, distressed and shocked, knowing well what Car was about, and sorry for the poor man, who, Mr. Brooke told them, had come to Eversfield full of good intentions, and most anxious to prove himself a faithful servant, in the service he had undertaken. "But Car," she mused, "that unfortunate sister of mine — she will turn the poor man's head, and unfit him for aught else."

Geraldine could have wrung her hands when she thought not only of this new phase in her sister's conduct, but on all the trouble and distress she was daily causing her parents and all belonging to her.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN we last left Car Eversfield, our readers may remember that it was immediately after the distressing scene which had been enacted after the General had received Captain Lawless's indignant rejection of his daughter, who only a few hours before had been this young man's affianced wife.

The father was indeed in a pitiable condition. Seated before him in the railway carriage was the child so fondly loved, and yet so fallen in his estimation, so changed even in appearance since they had travelled together so short a time ago. No longer brilliant, well turned out, radiant with smiles; but with swollen eyes, pale cheeks,

dishevelled hair, neglected dress, and down-cast looks, not daring to meet that hitherto so indulgent father's eyes.

Unfortunate General! he was thinking of many things which well-nigh distracted him.

His wife — how should he break to her the news? She, so ill in health, so unhappy — for the last accounts of the little boy had been most unfavourable, and the mother's heart was bleeding at the certainty which plainly stared her in the face, of losing her child.

This poor mother, so sick and sorrowful! and now he must add to her griefs by the news he had to impart; and then again —

And Car, as she furtively looked at her father, saw his cheek flush, his eyes gleam, and his teeth clench themselves together: never had she seen her father look like that. And then he would lean his head upon his hand, and appear to muse deeply,

suddenly starting up from his attitude of dejection and looking around, as if he had almost forgotten even where he was.

“What can he look so wild for? What is he going to do?” Car thought, with real terror, as thus she watched her father. “Does he intend to kill me, or that dear, naughty man? Would that I had not gone down to meet him! But what harm, after all, did we do? He is old enough to be my father, and as such I suppose I considered him; so if he did ——”

Here she blushed rosy red, and for a brief moment a smile played round her lips; but it soon died away, as she again observed her father's restless, distracted movements. The fact is, Sir Hector's mind was in a chaos of perplexity as well as distress, his blood boiling to avenge the insult offered to him by Lord Glendinning's late conduct towards his daughter. For to what did Lawless allude? Something disgraceful, no doubt; Car was quite equal to anything.

“And yet, if I chastise the scoundrel, the affair will be bruited about and exaggerated in every direction, and the girl is ruined for ever. . . . Yet, to have to live and bear it——” And the distracted father groaned aloud.

They were alone in the carriage. Car sprang forwards and threw herself upon her father’s breast, twining her arms round his neck.

“Papa—darling papa,” she cried, with real feeling, “don’t look so! What is the matter? I have been very foolish, very wrong; but, after all, there is nothing so very dreadful in what I have done to make you look so terrible. Oh, papa! papa!” she continued, as she clung so tenaciously to him, wetting his face with her tears, whilst she kissed him over and over again, the poor man becoming every moment more and more passive in her grasp; “I am a wild, foolish,—oh, yes, no doubt, a wicked girl; but not so bad in this instance as you think, and Lord Glendinning——”

"Don't name that villain!" Sir Hector furiously exclaimed, endeavouring to shake her off.

"Why call him such a name?" Car persisted. "I suppose it was wrong of him to ask me to walk with him at such an hour; but, papa, he is quite an old man — almost as old as you are — and I suppose he thought——"

"A thousand curses on his thoughts!" was the fiercely-muttered interruption.

"Yes, he thought," Car continued, "there was no great harm in asking me to join him in a stroll by the river, the moon shining quite as light as day, and I leaning out of my window and longing to go out. I'll tell you what I think, papa," Car exclaimed, feeling that she was gaining ground, and that her father did not, as at first, endeavour to disengage himself so roughly from her close embrace, "that Norman Lawless is a jealous, bad-tempered, horrid man; I never liked him.

Why did he not come and join us in our walk? We should have been very glad of his company,—*I* should, I know: for, darling pappy, I soon began to feel that I was, perhaps, doing wrong.”

And this girl, so false and yet so insinuating, began again to weep and caress her father. And the poor man did feel comforted, and tried to believe that all she said was true; that perhaps he had been too harsh in his judgment both of her conduct and Lord Glendinning’s.

We all know that Car Eversfield was a most unprincipled girl, a heartless flirt; but still there was something about her, which we cannot portray, indescribably fascinating. She was indeed a syren, possessing the art of captivation to a most wonderful extent. Perhaps it was her fresh beauty, her smile, the expression of good-nature which beamed from her face—for, with all her faults, the girl, though she had occasional tantrums, was essentially

good-tempered and affectionate, at least in her outward bearing.

But what the wonderful charm was that she possessed, by which she enthralled the senses, it is impossible to describe.

To her father she had always been inexpressibly dear; and now, as she thus hung over him, her soft wet cheeks resting upon his, her arms so tightly encircling him, her tender kisses on his lips, her words of love and contrition pouring forth so mournfully, his heart began to melt most weakly. When the train stopped at a station, and the door of the carriage opened to admit a passenger, he said —

“Well, well, Car, compose yourself, and wipe your eyes;” and by the tone in which the words were spoken, the culprit felt that the worst was over.

And as she disengaged herself from her father’s arms, and took her seat by his side, she could see that on his face there were

large tears, but perhaps they were those she had been shedding.

“Poor dear pappy!” she mused, “how I have tormented him! I wish, oh, how I wish I could be good for his sake; but——”

They had reached the station, three miles from Everslee. No carriage had been ordered to meet them. Sir Hector and his daughter got into a fly, leaving Fenton, with the luggage, to follow in another. Car did not lose the opportunity of improving the ground which she had already gained over her father’s feelings.

“Papa, you will not be too severe upon me with mamma; you know that already she has the worst opinion of me; and really, although I know I am to blame, yet indeed, indeed, the fault lies chiefly with that horrid, revengeful Norman Lawless. I never liked him, and should only have married him because I know you all want to get rid of poor troublesome me.” And she

leant her head on Sir Hector's shoulders, and wept again.

The foolish man—he felt terribly inclined to put his arm round her waist, and press his darling to his heart, but with a strong effort restrained himself, and said, as severely as he could —

“Of course, I shall endeavour to spare your mother's feelings as much as possible, Car, in her present state ; but my opinion you already know : and until I have every proof that you are thoroughly changed, you will never be to me what you have been.”

“But I will try to change, dearest papa,” were Car's last words before the fly drove up to the door of her home.

CHAPTER III.

How dull the house looked ! Every blind was down, and yet the sun was not shining : the day, on the contrary, was very gloomy. Sir Hector at once opened the door of the vehicle, and, without waiting to assist his daughter to alight, hastily got out, strode up the stone steps, and endeavoured to enter. But the door was locked.

He rang the bell impatiently, and almost immediately the old butler appeared.

There was no possibility of doubting, from his countenance, that he was laden with evil tidings.

"How is her Ladyship ?" Sir Hector asked hastily.

"My Lady is very ill ; and oh, Sir Hector,

poor little Master Henry!" and the faithful old servant turned away to hide his tears.

Sir Hector became deadly pale, and for a moment sat down on a hall chair; this brave man and soldier was trembling from head to foot whilst he murmured, "My poor wife!"

And then a pale fair girl might have been seen flying down the great staircase, and in another moment was in his arms, mingling her tears gently and silently with his; and Car, with her vociferous lamentations, also kneeling at his feet, and in loud sobs ejaculating the name of "poor, poor little Henry!"

But Sir Hector soon rose from the seat his momentary weakness had obliged him to take, and said, in a voice husky from emotion, "Now, Geraldine, take me to your mother."

And his good daughter, linking her arm affectionately in that of her father, led him to her mother's room; while Car, rushing

into the drawing-room, threw herself upon a sofa, burying her face in the cushions, and weeping tears both of sorrow and of exhaustion,—for it had been to her a day of most unwonted agitation and fatigue. No food had she tasted, save a few mouthfuls of coffee before leaving Westover. It was no wonder, then, that tired nature after a while gave way, and that soon deep sleep had rendered her happily oblivious of the troubles which, for the first time throughout the course of her careless, joyous existence, had ever touched her selfish feelings.

Geraldine had sought her sister, and finding her thus, was at first tempted to awaken her; but she changed her mind, and went to seek Nurse Nelson, not in the nursery, but in the quiet room which had been appropriated to the sick child, and in which his little coffin now stood. She found the poor woman, her head buried in her hands, crying as if her heart would break.

"Dear Nelson," she said, as with sad, noiseless steps she advanced and threw her arms round the nurse's neck, "Dear Nelson, it is not like you to give way to such bitter grief—you who have always been our only comfort and support through all this sorrow. What will mamma do if you break down? Papa is come, and Car. I went to seek her after I had taken him to poor mamma, and I found her fast asleep upon the drawing-room sofa. I want you, dear nurse, to go to her; you will do her more good than I can. She seemed dreadfully unhappy during the few moments I saw her, when they first arrived."

Mrs. Nelson was well-nigh tired out, poor woman, with watching and real sorrow; for she loved these children, whom she had received in her arms from their very birth, with quite as much warmth and sincerity as if they had been her own: and the sick child had been peculiarly dear to her, not only from his having been a most lovely

and interesting little creature, but because his long and suffering illness had drawn forth all the tenderness of her woman's heart.

But at these words of Geraldine, the nurse raised her weeping face.

"They are here, then," she said. "Your poor, poor papa—what a coming home for him! And Miss Car—— What did you say, my child? She asleep?"

"Yes, dear Nelson; but even in sleep she looks very wretched."

The nurse immediately arose: another child of her heart in distress: all her own feelings must be put aside at once. "I'll go to her; you won't mind staying here while I am away, darling," she added. "I cannot bear to leave him alone a moment, whilst he is still here."

"Oh, no; it will be a comfort, almost a happiness to me," Geraldine replied; "dear, darling little Henry! But, nurse, he must be so happy now!"

“Yes, yes, dear child, and very soon I shall feel thankful that the sweet lamb is safely folded, but just now God will forgive my mourning.”

And so saying, wiping her streaming eyes, she left Geraldine alone in the chamber of death, to seek another loved one. But even as she slowly went along, she thought—“Ah! that sweet, darling boy, he is indeed ‘safely folded.’ But Miss Car, Miss Car; my mind always misgives me when I think of her. Had it pleased God to take that child when she was as innocent and without guile as that dear babe, we might now be rejoicing over her sweet memory, as of another angel in heaven, instead of living, as we do now, in the constant dread lest she should do something wrong—something that will bring sorrow upon us all.” On her way downstairs she met Fenton, the ladies’ maid, who had just arrived. The two faithful servants met sadly. They had been friends together for

the many long years they had lived under the same roof.

"Yes," said Fenton, "nothing but distress for my poor Lady and Sir Hector. Oh, Nelson, even before he heard the news of the blessed little boy being removed, he was half mad with trouble."

"Oh, mercy!" cried Nelson, turning quite faint, "what next am I to hear?"

"Oh, Miss Car, of course,—she has been at her old pranks: but, Nelson, you'll hear all in time, and I promised Sir Hector to say as little as possible upon the subject; so you must not ask me any more questions. My poor Lady — how is she?"

After a little more conversation, Nelson proceeded to the drawing-room, and there, as Geraldine had said, she found Car stretched upon the sofa, sleeping profoundly. The nurse approached, and contemplated the sleeper. "Poor child," she thought, as she continued to gaze, "how strange she looks,—so unlike herself,—such

a miserable expression upon that usually laughing mouth, and those large tears not yet dried upon her pale cheeks,—her hair so untidy, as if it had not been touched this morning, — such a different look altogether about her. God help us, what has the child been doing? — and my poor Lady so pleased to hear that there was so good a marriage in prospect for her troublesome child—a drop of comfort in all her distress. Ah, me! light, indeed, is the death of an innocent babe when compared with the misery of watching the downward career of a living creature dear to one's heart. My little darling who lies so cold and stiff upstairs—yes, you are indeed safe; but this poor child—what is to become of her?" And Nurse Nelson's tears fell fast, and far more bitterly than before.

"But I won't disturb her," she decided; "I'll bring a shawl and wrap her up, she is so fast asleep, poor thing; and methinks her awakening will be none of the pleasantest."

But just as the nurse was preparing to put her intention into execution, Car opened her eyes, at first wearily, and unconsciously looking with perplexed gaze around her. Speedily, however, the whole truth of the present rushed upon her mind, and she had sprung up from her pillow, and was clinging around her nurse, feeling a security in that position which brought balm to her heart.

"Oh, nurse, nurse, I have been behaving so ill! I have made papa so angry; and my marriage with Captain Lawless is all off."

Mrs. Nelson groaned, but she said nothing.

"What will mamma say, Nelson?"

"Your mamma is so very unhappy, Miss Car, just now, that perhaps your papa will say as little as possible to vex her."

"Yes, I know she is; and so am I. Poor darling little Henry!"

"Not poor little Henry, but happy,

sainted little Henry," was the answer, rather sternly spoken — for Nelson's heart began to rebel against even this her hitherto favourite nursling, whose faults became more inexcusable day by day.

"Yes — yes, he is safe and happy, I know," Car continued, in a humbled voice; "not like me ; for were I to die, oh! Nelson, what would become of me?"

And now she really turned deadly white, and began to shiver perceptibly.

"I am very faint, nurse, and feel so ill!"

And then again came a complete revulsion in Mrs. Nelson's feelings. Car really suffering, and all her tenderness again gushed forth. Soon she had put her into her bed, had given her nourishment, was petting and fondling her as in past times, and listening with extenuating ears to the story which her favourite poured forth — Car, of course, with her usual disregard for truth, clothing every particular with a

colouring which completely changed the aspect of the affair, and throwing much of the blame, at least, off her own shoulders.

"Yes," Nelson began to think, "it was more than half the fault of that good-for-nothing reprobate, Lord Glendinnon; and then that young firebrand, Captain Lawless, to take it up in such a manner! And, poor child, she says she would have given worlds had he joined her in that foolish walk; but in every way, however we may try to make the best of it, it is a bad business."

Car was really indisposed for a day or two; and the deceitful girl took good care to improve the circumstance to her advantage. The indulgent people by whom she was surrounded attributed everything to distress of mind and repentant feelings; and her father, as he sat in deep dejection by her bedside, now speaking words of tender soothing, hoped that this severe lesson might prove in the end a blessing, and that his child might come forth an improved character.

Poor man! how easily can affection throw dust in one's eyes—obscure the vision from discerning what is sincere, and what is counterfeit.

He made the best of the story to Lady Julia, who at that time was in too great affliction to be very severe upon her daughter; and when they met, nothing passed between them but tears.

So Car, as she generally contrived to do, if she did not get off *scot free*, at least fared better than she deserved or expected. It was certainly a bore and a *gêne* to her to have to keep in abeyance all the wild thoughts and schemes with which her mind was filled, and to play the meek penitent—to look sad when she only felt bored—to pretend to be, in short, what she was not.

Soon the slight sorrow which her little brother's death had for the moment caused, wore off, and it was a wearisome task to

try to enter into the feelings of regret which were universal in the house.

She was terribly *ennuyée*, particularly as she had not even the luxury of being able to give way to her usual flights either of playful petulance or mischievous fun.

Anything would have been better than this feint of amiability.

Car really did not know what to do with herself. She could easily perceive that every one looked upon her with instinctive dread and suspicion. The governess was evidently most fidgety and uncomfortable whenever she entered the school-room to which her three younger sisters belonged.

Geraldine had her own occupations, which almost entirely engrossed her time; and her attendance upon Lady Julia was also unremitting, for military business took Sir Hector often away.

So thus this restless, excitable creature had to drag on an existence so terribly at variance with her nature.

CHAPTER IV.

LORD GLENDINNON, on leaving Westover, did not feel quite so completely at his ease as usual. It was seldom that any act of his, good, bad, or indifferent, made the slightest impression upon his mind.

In general perfectly callous as to the opinion of the world, what mattered it to him what people thought or said? But, somehow or another, in this instance, wonderful to say, his conscience rather pricked him.

His valet was an old and confidential servant—a very fit attendant for such a master—a crafty, unprincipled man, who had always been a useful tool in furthering many a dark intrigue, and who had become

a necessary evil to his employer, gaining, as is generally the case under such circumstances, a sort of influence over the mind of him he served, difficult either to shake off or to keep within proper bounds.

"No man is a hero to his *valet de chambre*;" and certainly Lord Glendinnon was not one to Monsieur Coitier. His peeps behind the curtain had very much shorn the renowned hero of his refulgent beams of glory; and the crafty Frenchman, with perfectly disenchanted perception, was thoroughly aware of every weak spot in his lordship's temperament, and acted accordingly.

"I fear milord has been disturbed early this morning?" Coitier demanded, as he was assisting at Lord Glendinnon's elaborate toilette, the morning of Car's departure from Westover.

"Disturbed! why should I be disturbed?" was the answer.

"Only because there was a terrible

fracas in the house ever since it was light."

"What the devil was the matter?" Lord Glendinnon asked, his last night's adventure still retaining a fresh hold on his memory.

"There seemed to be a great deal the matter,—that General Sir Hector carrying off the lovely young lady, his daughter, as if she had committed some very great crime. *Ma foi!* as I passed her room, how loud that papa of hers was storming; and when at length she came forth to get into the carriage, how changed the beautiful creature looked—her eyes so red, her cheeks so pale!"

A flush of colour evidently passed over Lord Glendinnon's face.

"Well! d—— it, go on; what else?"

"The young Captain Lawless, he was off too, but long before Sir Hector. I happened to be early from my bed this morning, and I saw it all,—his servant take a

letter to Sir Hector's footman, telling him to give it to his master when he was gone. I looked out of a window not far from the hall-door, and saw the young Captain's face quite white: he looked so as I should not have liked to have met him alone in a dark lane. Oh! it was a bad expression, that young man's; those fair men—don't you think, milord, they have a look more *farouche* in their faces, when they are in a passion, than darker-complexioned people?"

Lord Glendinning glared on the free-and-easy Frenchman.

"Hold your tongue about all that folly, you prating rascal, and go on with what you were saying about Sir Hector!"

"I know little more upon that subject, milord; something must have gone very wrong, to judge by appearances. Sir Hector, though not a fair gentleman, looked quite as ready to cut throats as the young monsieur in the Guards. The

poor young lady!—I felt pity for her; and even was sorry for the lady's maid, though she is not either young or pretty, she looked *si abattue* — 'chopfallen,' as the English would say."

Lord Glendinnon asked no more questions: the whole state of the case came clearly before his mind, and he was really annoyed on every account. He had played the fool immensely, and certainly it was with edged tools he had been amusing himself.

Sir Hector was the last man in the world to endure anything of this sort, and, bad man as he was, he could not avoid respecting one who stood so high in everybody's estimation. And with regard to this young Lawless, he had certainly destroyed all chance of that affair being concluded; but that little mattered. And then, again, the girl—and, wonderful to say, Car had made a much deeper impression upon the vitiated taste of this matured

libertine than any other object of his fleeting fancy had done for many a day. She suited him in every point of view—so young, so fresh, and evidently so taken with his perfections.

The high and mighty lord most assuredly went down to breakfast that morning with less of easy assurance at his heart than was his natural wont, and felt a degree of uncomfortable consciousness when he happened to catch the eye of Lady Millicent fixed so searchingly upon him. And even his railway journey to London had not removed the unrest of his sensations. The next morning, Lord Glendinnon read in the papers the announcement of the death of Sir Hector's child; and as he sat musing over the events of the day, an idea struck him, and, immediately acting upon it, he commenced writing the following letter:—

“Glendinnon House.

“MY DEAR EVERSFIELD,

“Allow me to express my sympathy in your recent affliction. I have just read the death of your boy in the *Times*, and sincerely trust Lady Julia bears the loss as well as it is possible under such a calamity.

“I also write to ask you, my dear fellow, to forgive what I fear you may have magnified into worse than folly, and of which I am heartily ashamed.

“You will think—and no wonder—that I am quite old enough to have known better; but perhaps that is the very excuse that I now make for having beguiled your daughter into taking a stroll with me on Wednesday night, — or rather morning. Such a grey-headed fellow as I am—quite as old, I really believe, as her father—I thought might venture to propose what would not have been the proper thing in a

younger man; and your daughter looked so longingly into the delicious moonlight scene, as she sat at her open window, that my evil genius prompted me to invite her to come out. I give you my word that I should have confessed my sin to you the next morning; but certainly the circumstance, innocent as it was of all actual harm, has produced results which I would give my remaining arm to have prevented.

“But there is nothing now to be done but to throw myself upon your generous forbearance, my hitherto good friend, and I only trust you will at least exonerate Miss Eversfield from any blame in the affair. I ought indeed to have known better.

“However, for her sake I would suggest to you that, living as we do in a lying and slanderous world, it would be as well for the sake of that young lady, for whom I entertain such high respect, that this episode should not be exaggerated; and, my dear Eversfield, the only way at once to

crush down falsehood and detraction is to show the venomous monsters with which society abounds that you do not look upon my conduct as such as to demand the withdrawal of your friendship. For heaven's sake, my dear Eversfield, let us be seen together, and the d——lish lies which may be hatched out of this silly affair (I really can call it by no other name) will soon die natural deaths.

“No doubt you are most justly offended with me, and I am heartily sorry that I should have brought annoyance upon a man whom I esteem above all others; and I also most deeply deplore that Miss Eversfield (the last young lady in the world, from her child-like innocence and simplicity, to become the object of malevolent detraction) should run any risk of being mixed up in any vulgar scandal of the sort.

“I remain, dear Eversfield,

“Truly and faithfully yours,

“GLENDINNON.”

Sir Hector received this letter, so apparently straightforward, nay, even humble, at a favourable moment. His heart was softened by the sorrow which pervaded the house; his wife's illness and Car's indisposition — of which she made the very most — distressed him sorely, and completely melted his anger towards her.

For her sake, perhaps it would be as well to act as had been pointed out by the wily man of the world.

What else could he do? He felt fettered by the love he bore to all belonging to him; and though in his heart of hearts he gave Lord Glendinnon no quarter, yet for their sakes he must sacrifice that burning desire to chastise the man who had thus presumed to act in a manner which had brought about such disastrous results.

Sir Hector was, indeed, greatly to be pitied. His domestic troubles seemed daily to increase, and he was also harassed by public business.

Yes, he was an overburdened father of a family; and those few words comprise an amount of care not to be estimated by the lightly-troubled heart of a bachelor.

CHAPTER V.

Two months had passed—interminable months to Car.

Yes, she was quite weary of playing good, and to the fullest extent acted up to her intention of turning the curate's weak heart, and creating for herself a sort of second-hand excitement. And this certainly proved no very difficult task.

Indeed, so easily did the poor man succumb, that the young lady would have thought the sport too tame to be continued, had she had anything else upon which to exercise her powers. Geraldine looked on, shocked and distressed, when she saw the young man neglecting his duties, and in a

fair way of losing the confidence of his rector.

Mr. Hale was much changed in appearance since Car had bewitched him. His dress was no longer such as to distinguish at first sight his grave profession, but had been remodelled according to hints thrown out by his enchantress; his "white choke," as Car had called it, was now reduced to a most fashionable size, or superseded by a narrow black ribbon; his tailor was called upon to send him clothes as little clerical as could be worn under existing circumstances.

So Mr. Brooke, the somewhat strict incumbent of Everslee, could scarcely believe his eyes when he one day encountered the curate walking with the two Miss Eversfields, now so transformed—his straight-cut black cloth coat exchanged for a black velvet article (which he thought looked very much like a shooting-jacket), light grey

trowsers, and well-polished boots, finished off with lavender-coloured gloves.

Geraldine always thought it her unpleasant duty to join the couple in their rambles.

Mr. Brooke stopped the party, and evidently examining the curate from head to foot, said, "How is Thomas Smith, Mr. Hale? I thought he was dying last night when I left the cottage. I told him you would be with him early this morning."

"I—I have not been to him yet, Sir; I was just going."

"I am very sorry to hear this, Mr. Hale, and you are now very far out of the direction of his cottage. However, I will go myself, and perhaps you will call at the Rectory this evening; I want to say a few words to you."

Then, looking severely grave, Mr. Brooke bowed to the ladies and went on.

The curate's morning had been taken up in unpacking the box from his tailor, and

trying on the clothes it contained, no doubt admiring himself mightily, in the largest looking-glass his lodging over the Post Office afforded.

He turned fiery red.

"How cross Mr. Brooke looks!" exclaimed Car; "but never mind," she added, "at least you have got out of the bore of visiting the sick man, and you can take a walk with us."

But Mr. Hale looked at Geraldine, and saw upon her countenance disapproval and annoyance. She said, however, unhesitatingly, "Mr. Hale, if you will take my advice, you will follow Mr. Brooke now, and not wait till the evening to explain away, if possible, this neglect of your duty. I know he is very particular in those matters; and," she added deprecatingly, "he had such good hopes that you would be a useful assistant in his arduous labours amongst the poor."

"What a kill-joy you are, Gerry!" ex-

claimed Car, petulantly. "Don't heed what she says, Mr. Hale; that sister of mine is a regular prudish old maid; come on, I have set my mind upon a good scrambling walk in the wood."

And the young man, who had stopped and hesitated whether he had not better follow out Geraldine's suggestion, could no longer withstand the alluring looks of entreaty cast upon him, and followed the hare-brained damsel; certainly it was sadly to the detriment of his fine clothes, for Car, regardless of thorns and briars, disdaining anything like a beaten path, followed by her two companions, *struggled* her way through the most entangled parts, and finally issued from the wood into a lane ankle-deep in thick clay mud.

Ah! me! for the polished boots and lavender-coloured gloves! Even the smiles of the beautiful Car scarcely compensated for the melancholy state of the delicate-tinted trowsers, so encrusted were the legs by the miry soil.

And then, when the young ladies were gone, and nothing remained but his soiled clothes, and the remembrance of the evening's appointment at the Rectory, the curate's heart sank within him; and as he donned once more his suit of proper clerical cut, Car's charms rather diminished in their perfection when he remembered what a wild-goose chase she had led him, in that (he would have liked to have said) "infernal wood, and still worse lane."

And Mr. Brooke did speak most severely to the curate—he was a plain-spoken, though really excellent, kind-hearted, and most zealous man—upon the subject of the total neglect of his duty during the last month; the Rector did not spare him in any one particular. "And your dress, sir," he added, "I really scarcely knew you again; that is not the guise in which you ought to kneel on the brick floor by the bedside of some sick cottager. So I tell you the truth, I don't approve of such things, I like sober,

hard-working men, with hearts entirely devoted to their business, for my curates,—not dandies, who are always dawdling by the side of young ladies, neglecting their duty, and living only to amuse themselves.”

By this time poor Hale’s face had become so red, and he looked so like being on the point of shedding tears, that the Rector’s mood began to soften.

“Oh, well!” he continued, “I am sure this will not happen again. Ours is a very responsible calling, my dear young friend; and to take our duties thoughtlessly and carelessly is a sin before God and man. That poor fellow, whom you ought to have visited, was dead when I arrived at his cottage; and his poor wife told me he was looking so anxiously for you, and wishing so earnestly for a prayer, before his spirit took its flight; and Mrs. Smith added, ‘My poor husband used to be so comforted by Mr. Hale’s words, but he has not been here much of late.’”

Mr. Hale's weak but really good nature was now fairly overcome, and the Rector, shaking him by the hand, said kindly :

"We shall work more hand in hand in future, I am sure, Mr. Hale, so let us forget this casual interruption to my hitherto perfect satisfaction in your conduct."

And the poor curate returned to his dismal lodging, and as he passed the interval till bed-time, trying to brush off the pertinaciously adhering mud from the light grey trowsers, and examining with dismay the destructive rents in his black-velvet jacket, he heaved many a sigh whilst moralising over the events of the day. We wonder whether he was cured of his love fit by this transient repentance, caused by the Rector's lecture and his soiled finery.

"Oh, Car, upon my word this will never do!" exclaimed Geraldine, as soon as the curate was fairly out of sight and hearing. "You really shock and disgust me more than I can describe. How abominably you

are behaving to that poor young man, without the slightest compunction; making him unfit for his profession, systematically endeavouring to injure him in every way. Mr. Brooke was evidently extremely angry, and, poor young man, no wonder! What a changed character he is from what he was when he first came; and his dress is so unlike what it ought to be, for a poor country curate."

Car burst into such an immoderate fit of laughter, that she was obliged to stop for a few minutes to hold her sides before she could proceed, and then said, during the intervals of her merry ringing peals,—

"Yes, I have done it out-and-out. Oh, Gerry, I thought I must have died when he first appeared before us to-day. Did you ever set eyes on such a guy of a man as he has made of himself?—and that little wide-awake, placed so jauntily on one side of that yellow mop of curls! The fact is, I was describing the other day exactly my

beau-ideal of how I liked a man to dress in the country, and the ridiculous ape has tried to clothe himself as nearly as possible after my description ; only one thing he has omitted, and before a week is over that shall be done."

"For mercy's sake," Geraldine exclaimed, "do no more mischief; you ought to recollect all that you promised papa, and ——"

But her speech was cut short by Car, who, too full of her plan of mischief to heed a word Geraldine was saying, rattled on.

"I shall have all that bushy thatch cropped short; I shall tell him that it is the proper thing for all young men to wear their hair convict fashion, that is to say, the head made to look as much as possible in the shape of a bowl, and his ears, which are enormous, and always red, exposed to view; I shall hint that those lovely curls must be cut off, and may be retained to be presented as love-tokens; no doubt I shall receive one. You'll see what I shall accom-

plish ; there will be such a fall of stubble ; and, by the bye, I shall never be satisfied till I have him in knickerbockers." And the idea caused the merry laugh again to ring through the air, and the grave sister saw that there was no use in saying any more. No, Car was incorrigible.

Such a different creature, the sober Geraldine, it seemed impossible that she could be the younger sister of such a lawless madcap ; her whole nature so totally different, not a thought, a hope, a pursuit, a pleasure, in any way assimilating with Car's.

" She dwelt apart from early youth,
In gentle household ways,
Contented with her mother's smiles,
And with her father's praise.
Hers was the grace of quiet born ;
Of fancies mild and pure ;
Of making love that could obey,
And strength that could endure.

“Beauty from simplest actions rose,
And harmony from strife,
So kindly did her spirit face
The elements of life.
Hers was the heart that freely gave
The ready smile or sigh;
The cheek that true to feeling flushed,
The bright and upward eye.”

We have borrowed a little poetry to
spare our readers any further description
of the gentle Geraldine Eversfield.

CHAPTER VI.

GERALDINE looked so grave, as she walked on with her thoughtless sister, who, having in a degree exhausted her laughter; turned her attention to her companion, whose distressed face now caught her eye.

“What a fool you are, Gerry!” she exclaimed, stamping her foot; “truly you are, as I said before, a regular kill-joy; you grudge me every little innocent amusement. What harm, pray, can there be in just getting a rise now and then out of that goose of a parson?—it will do him a great deal of good,—shake him up a little, and teach him the ways of the world.” Geraldine only shook her head sadly. What

was the use of wasting words upon her giddy companion?

Car now began to be irate, and her mood suddenly changed from loud laughter into loud weeping, as was often her wont, flying from one extreme to the other.

"What a miserable creature I am!" she sobbed. "Everybody and everything always against me. You ought to be glad rather than sorry, you unfeeling wretch! when I can find anything to amuse me a little;—I, so wretched, so forlorn, so disappointed! It is very well for you, who can find pleasure in all this stupid, dirty work, of visiting the poor, and that sort of thing; but it is not my taste; and, oh, what have I not lost? I might have been on the point of marrying a gay, rich, young husband, and so have got out of all this dismalness for life."

"Yes, Car, and whose fault was it that you lost him?" Geraldine demanded.

"Whose fault? you cruel, unfeeling crea-

ture!—whose fault? Not mine!” and the weeping recommenced with full force.

They now suddenly emerged from the lane upon the high road which led to the gates of Eversley Park. The sisters walked quickly on, looking neither to the right nor left, both too disagreeably engrossed by their own thoughts to heed any sound which might meet their ears; therefore the noise of horses' feet behind them occasioned no interest, and when they did glance carelessly around, they became aware that a large, gay cavalcade of riders, both gentlemen and ladies, were passing them in full speed. Car's tear-stained face had been raised, but only for a moment.

It was sufficient, however, for her quick eye to discover one amongst the party, and that one was Norman Lawless; and, moreover, she knew that he had seen her.

It was but the work of an instant. The next, the equestrians had passed rapidly on, and were, by a turning in the road, soon lost to sight.

"Gerry! Gerry!" Car gasped, as she seized her sister's arm and crept close to her side, "did you see him?"

"Him! Whom do you mean?" was the answer. "I only saw that there were a great many men and ladies; I distinguished no one in particular."

"But I did, and he saw me, too, and with all these silly tears on my cheeks. Yes, I saw Norman Lawless, and he looked so handsome. Oh, what a foolish, senseless girl I was to lose such a chance! I wonder where he is staying. Oh, I dare say at the Laurels! Louise told me that the Bosanquets had a gay house full, and I have heard him talk of these friends; and there are some pretty Miss Bosanquets. Oh, Gerry, Gerry, what am I to do? It would have been so much better to have been his, or anybody's wife, rather than waste all my best days in this detestable, horrid hole. Speak, you idiot! cannot you say anything to console me?" and again her tears burst forth.

“No, I cannot, Car; although I am truly sorry for you, and would feel too glad if I had it in my power to serve you in any way; but that is not possible.” And she thought, sorrowfully, of the impracticable, hopeless character of her sister. “It is no use advising you to take what I think the only course for you to pursue.”

“And what is that, pray?”

“Why, to resign yourself to the fate your own misconduct has brought upon you, and to behave more prudently in future.”

Poor Geraldine! you might, indeed, have spared your breath and your feelings, for this speech acted upon the excited, ignitable spirit of the girl like gunpowder thrown upon the fire.

She blazed up furiously, and poured forth such a flood of invective upon poor Geraldine, that by the time they had reached home it was the meek sister's tears which were now flowing, whilst those of Car had

dried upon the cheek, so hot and flushed with the various impetuous feelings which filled her mind.

* * * * *

And what were Norman Lawless's sensations at so unexpected a crisis?

When he left Westover on that miserable morning, after having discovered the perfidy of his affianced bride, he had returned to London with passions raging in his breast, the more fiercely torturing because they must be for ever untold. He must not be the one to publish his own disgrace. Yes, he had been betrayed, laughed at, scorned; and yet, still more horrible to contemplate, this girl, so false, so perfidious, had pledged herself to marry him; and would have become his wife, caring not for him,—indeed, to use her own words, hating and detesting him, evidently preferring another. Bitter were his denunciations against this creature, so frantically loved; and fierce, vindictive rage burnt

with deadly violence at his heart, to avenge his wrongs on the man who had thus so deeply injured him.

On first arriving in London, his firm resolve was to break down every barrier and insult the matured villain (so he designated the great man), to beard him to his face. What cared he for the results,—for the loss of his commission,—for all the evils which might follow? Like the father of his false love, he felt that he could not live in the same world with the man who had injured him in the most vital part.

On his arrival in London, however, a letter awaited him from his mother. Lady Curraghmore had long been manœuvring to bring about a marriage between one of her daughters and a certain elder son of a Scotch baronet, and had at length succeeded; the parents on both sides having talked the respective parties into consenting to a scheme little palatable to either. The wedding was to take place without delay, and

Norman was requested to obtain leave of absence and repair immediately to Lough Rea, in order to attend the nuptials. Her Ladyship added: "I hope you and Lord Curraghmore will be now satisfied that your cousin Rosalinda is likely to receive from her father's family a sufficient degree of attention and consideration, when I tell you that she is to be our guest for an indefinite period. The Sunderlands have, in a most unscrupulous manner, quartered her upon us. It seems that Lady Elizabeth is in a declining state, requiring, they say, their constant presence and attention at Torquay, and Lady Sunderland adds that this would be a very favourable opportunity for her young friend to visit her father's relations; particularly as no doubt Miss Isabella Lawless would be glad of her cousin's presence at her approaching marriage. Most free and easy, to say the least of it, I consider this conduct of Lady Sunderland's, and much do I disapprove of the plan alto-

gether; and, I am happy to say, neither of your sisters shows any pleasure at the idea of this strange girl's companionship. However, we are of course powerless in the matter. Your father will hear of no refusal; but you, no doubt, who generally side against your mother, will fully approve of this proceeding. The girl is to arrive to-morrow."

* * * * *

This was the substance of Lady Curraghmore's letter, which Norman at first read with the utmost indifference, and went early to bed, the first time in his life, like his perfidious mistress, worn out in spirits and really very wretched.

But what does not sleep achieve for the young? Generally proving their restoration; certainly the best comforter of the sad heart

"Whom fortune's spite assails."

Norman, notwithstanding his misfortunes,

slept soundly; and the next morning felt more composed as he lay ruminating, and, though the wounds of his heart were still bleeding, his powers of reasoning were more clear,—and when the unfortunate young lover turned his face to the wall, in order to hide from his servant his countenance, upon which might be seen traces of emotion (he would rather have died than expose them to any living creature), his mother's letter recurred to his memory, with a degree of satisfaction her letters seldom afforded.

“Yes, it is as well that I should go to Lough Rea, or I shall be making bad worse. I *must* insult that arch-fiend, should I meet him, and then the whole story will be out. Yes, I shall be as a worm under his foot. I shall be crushed; exposed to the ridicule of all London; and she, that false one! She——” and he ground his teeth. “Yes, there I should have my revenge on her, as far as the

exposé could blast her character for ever; but ——” and he groaned. “No; there is nothing for me but to go at once to Lough Rea, and I shall really be glad to see that good-natured little Rosalinda again.”

And so he went.

CHAPTER VII.

LINDA entered into the plan of visiting her relations with very mixed feelings.

The dear Highlands where she had spent such a happy time, where she had first seen Norman, how delightful to be there again, and in that grand old house, amidst those delicious mountains, and to meet Norman, and to be so kindly greeted by her uncle ; but then Lady Curraghmore, the very idea sent a *frisson* all over her frame ; and her cousins, Margaret and Isabella, those two icicles, who never seemed to thaw towards her. However, there was no help for it, she must go ; and, to say the truth, she did feel very dull, and longed for change of any sort.

The short glimpses of the world during the last few months, had rather unsettled the little girl—they had proved so very pleasant to her taste, and now she was left almost entirely to her own resources—the governess even gone, and Lord and Lady Sunderland completely occupied with the invalid.

Lord Sinclair gone off, as usual, abroad.

Oh! it was very dismal; any change would be a relief: and Norman had told her never to mind his mother's disagreeable ways. Then the wedding, that would be something so new and amusing.

It did seem rather extraordinary that any one should wish to make Isabella a companion for life—such a dull, cold, uninteresting girl; however, she concluded it was probably her own ignorance and bad taste which had made her view her cousin thus ungraciously.

Linda was not cognisant of all the secrets of the prison-house.

Isabella had no choice in the arrangement of her marriage; her consent had never even been asked. Lady Curraghmore had informed her daughter that her hand had been demanded in marriage by Daniel Craigie, and that she had accepted the offer.

It was a most eligible match, fortune, position, et cetera, et cetera.

What matter was it that Isabella turned ashy pale when she received the communication; the wily mother knew well all the workings of her daughter's mind, and this knowledge had caused her to fix upon the youngest to be the bride of the raw young Craigie, who, just come of age, thought it no fun to be so soon tied for life to an ugly, red-haired, cross-looking girl — so he designated his future bride.

Lady Craigie was a second Lady Curraghmore in her family; supreme in all ways, and, moreover, the most congenial and intimate friend that lady possessed; they were on all points kindred souls.

Isabella's ample dower and the "honourable" affixed to her name, were quite sufficient qualifications to insure Lady Craigie's consent and co-operation for the furtherance of the plan, and she continued to talk over her son, who had never yet dared to gainsay his mother's word. He only ventured to remark: "Well, if I am to have one of them, why not let it be Margaret?—she is the best looking of the two."

But Lady Curraghmore had her reasons for the lot falling on Isabella. She was perfectly aware that, with all her iron rule, she had not been able to avert the shafts of Cupid's bow, and that Isabella was deeply smitten with the good-looking minister who inhabited the Manse of Lough Rea; so, as prevention is better than cure, she took instant steps to that effect.

She would not lower her dignity by allowing any one for a moment to imagine that she could believe such a thing possible; no, not even the culprit herself. So

the unfortunate girl was spared at least her mother's bitter reproofs; but she had to succumb to the doom which she perfectly knew was inevitable.

Margaret's only words of consolation were, "I am very sorry, Isabella, but there is no help for you, nor for me, when my time comes. Daniel Craigie is raw and uncouth; however, he is young, and may improve, and he's *rich*, and that, I suppose, we ought to think enough for this world's happiness; at least, we have been educated in that belief. Upon my word, considering all things, you are fortunate in not having to marry a much more revolting man. I wonder what rich horror will be picked out for me, for no daughter of our mother will ever wed the man of her choice."

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that Linda thought that a wedding was no such very pleasant prospect to the parties concerned.

Lady Sunderland had taken care that she

should be provided with a pretty present for the *fiancée*, but it was received with cold indifference, and very feeble thanks.

"I hope you like my little offering, Isabella?" Linda asked, with a mortified look.

"Oh, yes, I do; but——oh, Linda!" And, to Linda's dismay, her seemingly impossible cousin burst into a fit of weeping.

* * * * *

Lady Curraghmore received Linda with more civility than she had expected. In her own Highland home, the rights of hospitality were, she considered, a sort of moral duty, which might be dispensed with in the English mansion in Grosvenor Square; and at this moment her Ladyship's heart was full of exultation at having secured such an eligible match for one of her unattractive daughters.

Lord Curraghmore, as usual, was all warmth and affection; and the prospect of Norman's arrival gave a bright colouring

to all around. Linda was sorry to see Isabella so low-spirited; but Margaret said it was only natural she should grieve at the idea of leaving home. Linda thought that to quit such a home of frigidity could not elicit any very acute sensations of regret; however, it was impossible to judge of other people's feelings, and it was a beautiful home, most certainly, that she was about to quit. Those who lived in foreign regions, her foreign governess used to tell her, were often afflicted with a "*maladie du pays*;" perhaps this sickness had already assailed her. So she reflected, as she looked forth upon the landscape around the mountain which based the mansion,—the crowning rocks fantastically heaped like an upraised cross; the pine forest, in the wild country beyond, looking on moonlight nights like a battle-field of gigantic skeletons,—all the romance of her nature was called forth, and she then scarcely wondered at Isabella's reluctance to the

thoughts of leaving her wild mountain home.

And the next day Norman was to arrive, and she should be with him again in that wonderful old Hall, and by the beautiful river-side. Yes; she had already been there, had lived over in recollection those moments—engraved with such brilliant colours upon her mind, her heart—when she had first looked upon his face—that face so fondly loved!

She saw the carriage, which was to convey him from a far-off railway station, whirl away.

What would she have given to have gone with it to meet him, and how many hours would elapse before he could arrive!

A weary day it would, indeed, prove; and so it was to Linda, as with others within those walls.

The next morning was fixed for the wedding. The family, with the exception of Lord Curraghmore and his son, were

Presbyterians; the ceremony would, therefore, take place in the house—the wonderful old hall, the pride of so many succeeding ages, the place appointed for its celebration.

Guests were arriving at all hours of the day; and Linda's heart leaped high at every sound of the pealing hall-bell, but no Norman made his appearance.

The whole family of Craigies had arrived: father, mother, and four sisters, who, with Linda and Margaret, were to act as bridesmaids. Sir Daniel was a diminutive, infirm old man, not certainly the *better* half of his wife, who was enormous in dimensions, both as to height and stoutness,—most formidable to look at, indeed, Linda thought, and no wonder; Isabella dreaded her as a second mother, one already of such a kind, so far too much, in her opinion. The sisters were more or less commonplace, and evidently looked upon her with no cordiality. Of course, they had been

duly warned against forming any intimacy with the Italian Opera singer's daughter.

But little cared Linda; her mind was far too engrossed by her own thoughts and anticipations to heed aught else; and, when dinner-time arrived, and she believed no Norman had come, her cheeks had flushed to the deepest red, and her eyes were brilliant from excitement, rendering the usually pale girl strikingly handsome. She took her seat, dreamy and abstracted,—a feeling of bitter disappointment at her heart.

The numerous guests were all seated, she as usual by Lord Curraghmore's side, and the dinner had some time commenced, when she asked,—

“For whom are you keeping that seat, uncle?”

It was the one on the other side of him.

“For whom, my pretty niece? Why, for the boy who is just come to take it,” was the answer, as Norman appeared, and was beckoned by his father to the empty chair.

Linda could have clapped her hands with joy; and Norman smiled kindly at the little cousin, who looked so glad to see him. But Linda's pleasure soon subsided into anxiety.

"How changed he looks," she thought; "so pale and thin, and, I should say, so sad. Yes; what can ail him?" she continued to muse. "Can he be ill?" and she began furtively to examine his countenance, her own losing its beaming look whilst she traced symptoms of suffering on her cousin's face.

But Norman looked gently, affectionately upon the girl—more so than he had ever done before. His heart was sore from the treachery of one whom he had so passionately loved; it was soothing to feel those tender glances of his little cousin, now in her ripening womanhood so pretty and attractive.

"Dear little creature!" he thought; "I love her as I ought to have loved my sisters."

And after dinner he took his place by her side ; and, though he was silent and abstracted, still it seemed to be a comfort to him to sit near her in the embrasure of the deep oriel window in the great saloon, into which a glorious moon poured the full splendour of its rays.

“Do you remember our midnight drive to the Lodge, Norman?”

“Perfectly, little cousin; and I remember ‘*Vaga Luna.*’”

“How happy I was that night!” Linda sighed.

“Yes, Linda; happiness flies away as soon as we become men and women—have you not found that to be the case?”

“I am very happy at this moment,” she answered artlessly. “It is so delightful to find ourselves with those we love; and, Norman, no sister could love you better than I do.”

And, as the moon’s rays fell upon the ardent, loving face, Norman felt that had

he been heart-free he could have loved her even better than a sister; but now his heart had done for ever with woman-love, and the image of that false one rose up before his imagination with all the bewitching charms which had undone him — yes, and that is not too strong a term to use — it had undone him.

Norman Lawless's nature was one of extremes; his was an ill-regulated mind, born with impetuous passions; and what advantages had he derived from education, precept, or example? The young man was not naturally wholly bad, but the few scattered germs of good, which he might have claimed as a birth-right, had been choked and smothered by the selfish indomitable feelings which unlimited indulgence had crowded into his heart. Norman's passionate feeling towards Car Eversfield was indeed vitally injuring him, casting a portentous dark shadow over his existence, which boded nought but misery,

worthless as he knew her to be, his own ears having heard, his own eyes having beheld her perfidy. Still — yes, still the passion clung to his senses, and he even now frantically adored her, and felt that with all her sins, even knowing her to be heartless, perfidious, every thing that is bad, still — still, the Circe's image clung to his fancy, held him fast ; and fool, abject wretch as he was, even now he could lie at her feet, take her in his arms, and — and — forgive her.

And, from these ideas he would recoil, even with horror, with disgust at himself. Was he indeed sunk so low as to be able for a moment still to entertain the idea of taking to his bosom, yes, even as his wife such a girl as Car Eversfield ?

But so it was. "Madness ! madness !" he thought, as he struck his forehead, and gnashed his teeth, at this image of his ignoble self.

No wonder the young [man looked the

ghastly spectre of his former self; and as he sat there in the soft moonlight by the side of his loving little cousin, her child-like purity and unselfish affection for him, unworthy as he was, cast, nevertheless, a kind of soothing influence around, and he felt that there was indeed a strange difference between the innocence, the guileless simplicity of a well-nurtured girl, compared with the feverish excitement, the restless presence, of a world-taught, world-initiated young lady.

All the effect, however, this had upon Norman was to render his feelings for the moment gentler; but his depressed countenance struck such a chill on Linda's heart, that, creeping close to him, she said —

“Norman, dear Norman, what is the matter?”

He raised his eyes upon the eager inquiring face.

“Oh! Linda, there is much the matter. I am thoroughly wretched; there is no hope

left for me in this world. Oh! I wish that I were dead!"

Linda trembled with affright.

"Oh! Norman, Norman, would that I could comfort you!" she exclaimed; "I would give my last drop of blood to serve you."

"I really think you would, good little cousin," he said, taking her hand affectionately, "but you nor any one else can help me; I am past help."

"Dear Norman, say not such dreadful words. You unhappy, you past help! impossible—I could not have imagined that sorrow could have dared to approach you."

"Do you think, Linda, that I am an excepted one from the worst of evils to endure, a wounded spirit, a heart torn by cruelty and treachery? Oh! little cousin, could you look into my heart, you would find it lacerated, bleeding, and the hand which inflicted the deadly wound is one I have so fondly loved."

And Norman leant his elbow upon the window-sill, and with his hand covered his face. Linda sat in silence by his side, her hands clasped upon her knees, her eyes uplifted, staring with a vacant gaze upon the bright orb which was lighting up that oriel window.

And what were the thoughts of that innocent maiden? Norman had declared that he loved another; did this revelation cause her heart to beat with jealous pangs, for she too loved him fondly, fervently?

No, strange to say, as yet her love was quite unselfish. This revelation only touched her as relating to him, to his present wretchedness, and that was quite enough to enlist her sympathy; she must love him always, come what may, but to avert unhappiness from him was at this moment all she cared for—she could not bear to see that bright beloved cousin utterly cast down. Who was the wretch who had thus wrecked his happiness?— and

her heart swelled high with anger—Could it be that radiant creature she had seen in the Brookwood race-stand?

Her bright image had often haunted Linda's mind, that "beautiful fiend," as Norman had called her, and she remembered well how pale he looked, and how his countenance had changed, whilst in her presence.

Linda's Italian blood boiled tumultuously in her veins, her heart beat wildly.

"Norman, she is unworthy of you. She is a beautiful fiend," she whispered in his ear.

The young man started.

"What do you know of her, Linda?" he asked hastily, fixing his bloodshot eyes upon the girl, who had risen, and was standing before him.

"You told me she was a 'beautiful fiend,' that girl at Brookwood. Oh! Norman, shake off her influence; never mind, the wound is painful, but that will heal dear

Norman; but for Heaven's sake, never think of her again. She *is* a fiend. I saw that at once, for though she is beautiful, she is bad. I watched her countenance whilst she was talking to that fierce-looking man, and oh! it made me shudder."

"Yes, Linda, it is all too true, and yet she has destroyed me, body and soul, has made me——"

"Oh! and here you have been hiding, you naughty little darling; we have been hunting for you in every direction; and dancing going forward in the big hall, and all the young men looking for you; come along, and you too, Norman, you used to be a capital hand at a reel; come, and let's have one," and Lord Curraghmore snapped his fingers in anticipation."

"Not I," groaned Norman; "don't you see I am ill, sir?"

"Ill, my boy; what ails you? you certainly do look seedy, Norman: you are

knocked up, I suppose, by that deuced long journey."

"Yes, and I am only fit for bed. So good night, Linda," and without further delay Norman departed, but not to bed. For hours he wandered amidst the wild scenery which surrounded the place, ascending rocks and mountains, and when wearied by the toilsome ascent, throwing himself exhausted upon the perfumed turf. How pale was his face, his eyes turning so restlessly, as there he lay, the moon floating out upon the deep blue heavens, and pouring her silver light full upon the unhappy young man.

CHAPTER VIII.

It seemed as if Lady Curraghmore was far too much engrossed by the requirements of the present important business to heed the disturbed looks of her son. But it was not so.

She noted all; had seen for some time that something was going amiss with Norman — indeed her lynx-eyed curiosity with regard to his proceedings never slumbered nor slept. She was perfectly aware that he had been paying marked attention to Miss Eversfield—that notorious flirt, a marriage with whom she would indeed have been the very last to have sanctioned. But she well knew the spirit she had to compete with, and that a word from her might set

fire to a train devastating indeed in its nature. No, she must be silent, and wait.

The girl had jilted so many, was so fickle and false, that Norman would probably share the fate of those she had already spurned, and with stern anxiety filling her mind, the iron-hearted woman confided the secret care to no one. And now she saw her son the pale image of despair, and rejoiced. "Yes, it is all right, and my prudent silence is rewarded. The girl has played him her usual trick, and turned him off."

Little heeded the mother that the young man was heart-stricken, that he suffered agonies of mind. So much the better, it would be a salutary lesson. No kind soothing look or word was vouchsafed to the miserable son. Lady Curraghmore bustled about amongst her numerous guests with a lightened spirit, gloating over her son's discomfiture. Not that she did not love him to the very extent of her unloving

nature; but not one spark of sympathy could be elicited from her hardest of hearts. Not even did she remark upon the haggard looks of this favourite child, when he at length made his appearance the next day, looking so ill as to excite general notice.

* * * *

The marriage was to be celebrated as quietly as possible, not in the style of a true Highland wedding. Lady Curraghmore was not of a nature to participate in scenes of joyous hilarity. All must be done *en règle*, and with grave propriety, as far as the interior of the house of Lough Rea was concerned.

Money she was quite content to give, to entertain the peasantry and the dependants on the estate: bonfires might blaze, and any amount of whisky be drunk, so that nothing uproarious took place within the precincts of her immediate domain; all things must be conducted there with solemn decorum.

A celebrated popular preacher was invited from Edinburgh to perform the usual ceremony of their church. The poor young minister of the Lough Rea manse was, however, invited to assist, but some fortunate means of escape occurred, either real or imaginary, to necessitate his absence at that moment; and Lady Curraghmore gloried in secret over her well-devised plans and prudent concealment of all knowledge of her daughter's foolish fancy.

The hall was a real specimen of one belonging to an old Highland mansion, which as yet had escaped the innovation of modern improvement, and it was an imposing sight when prepared for the marriage solemnity.

On one side it was decorated with arms of the olden time, arranged in many fantastic shapes; ponderous battle-axes and huge claymores, belonging to defunct chiefs of the families, now rusted from disuse; and suits of armour of many an ancestor,

some of whom had died in the defence of their country.

The other sides of the hall were hung with red deer hides, above which branching antlers were reared on heads of deer, which, in every attitude of life, gazed with royal eyes upon every visitor. All this looked grimly picturesque, but little assimilating with the modern-looking company then assembled.

Raised seats had been placed at one end for the domestics and the few retainers who were honoured by an invitation to be present upon the occasion; the other guests being provided with seats surrounding the spot fixed upon for the clergyman to pronounce his blessing upon the bridal pair.

To the English eye, the Presbyterian marriage ceremony is imposing from its primitive simplicity.

The clergyman addressed the bride with fatherly earnestness, setting before her the duties of the holy state; and then turned

to the bridegroom, and exhorted him to love and cherish his wife. He next joined their hands, and announced them to be now, with his blessing and their own consent, a married pair.

And the whole was finished by his pouring forth a prayer in low, pleading tones, — his eloquence and feeling impressing every listener.

And Isabella, how did she enact the *rôle* of bride? There certainly must be something very transforming, for the moment, in the position of a bride issuing forth from her chamber—a glamour cast over every eye—for when was there a bride who did not look (if not lovely) at least somewhat attractive on her wedding-day, and in her wedding dress? Therefore, when Isabella appeared, leaning on her father's arm, followed by her troop of bridesmaids,—a splendid veil thrown over her magnificent dress of the richest material, subduing the effect of her red

hair and red eyes,—she appeared, thus indistinctly seen, as a bride ought to look.

And the bridegroom?—but he always plays second best on those occasions, and comes in for little share of the observation so largely bestowed on the bride and her attire. Young Craigie appeared more awkward and shy than usual, and certainly afforded a strong contrast to Norman Lawless, who was ordered by Lady Curraghmore to stand by his side as “best man” to his future brother-in-law.

“How handsome and aristocratic he looks,” Linda thought, as her eyes fixed themselves upon her cousin; “but, oh, how pale, how wretched! What can be done to make him happier?”

What, indeed!

The wedding was over; the bride and bridegroom gone; and those remaining left with that dull feeling over every mind which, as a matter of course, generally succeeds such an event. The rest of the

day passed heavily. Norman did not again appear till dinner was on the table, and then took his place more abstracted than ever,—scarcely even heeding Linda, who watched his every turn of countenance; and after dinner he did not again join her in the oriel window, although the moon was shining into it as brightly as the night before.

There was dancing; and Linda was sought eagerly by all the young men present, and she dared not refuse to accept engagements for every dance. How she would have enjoyed this her first ball, had it not been for her anxiety for Norman!

The little girl was much admired; and more than one Scotch laird went away with anything but a whole heart that night.

An English girl seldom fails to be appreciated in the North country. Their quiet, lady-like, refined manners, their different style of beauty, colouring, and

tout ensemble in general, is usually taking to a Scotchman,—particularly if with these adjuncts there appears a blending of good-humour and sportive mirth in their bearing.

Norman scarcely made his appearance in the room after having opened the ball with the eldest Miss Craigie, which he had been persuaded to do by Lady Curraghmore. He had declared that he was ill, and could not dance; and Linda saw him, as she passed through the rooms with her partners, always in the same place, leaning out of one of the windows in the oriel recess, seeming in rapt contemplation of the glorious harvest moon.

But once, quite late, he sauntered into the ball-room; and the musicians striking up a waltz, he suddenly turned to Linda, who at that moment was unoccupied, and asked her to take a turn with him.

“ Oh! Norman, I should like it so much, but I have scarcely ever waltzed; they never allowed me to learn to waltz; but I

think I can manage it, if you will excuse my awkwardness."

And the next moment they were flying round; Linda becoming more and more intoxicated by the exquisite sensation of enjoyment, known only to those who have revelled in the delight, which, whilst it lasts, appears certainly to be most powerful, particularly when partaken with a partner perfect in his, or her, fitness for the dance:

"Oh, how delicious, Norman!" gasped Linda, as, breathless and panting at last, he led her to the oriel window, "I should like to waltz for ever."

Norman sighed deeply.

"Yes, it is a rapturous dance, Linda, I have often found it so; but you said you had never waltzed before; you are perfect as a partner."

"Oh! am I, Norman? I am so glad you think so; I never learnt it from Madame D——, but the Grevilles, who live near

Belmont, with whom I sometimes spend the day, they taught me."

"Linda, I am going to-morrow!" Norman said abruptly.

"To-morrow! oh pray, pray don't say so, Norman," Linda cried in consternation. "We have not had one walk,—I was looking forward to so many; we have not been down to the river, that dear, dear river, where I first saw you, Norman, that happy day."

Norman turned with rather a startled look upon the face of Linda, and was silent for a while. For the first time a surmise had risen in his mind, and as he continued to gaze upon that countenance, so speaking always, and now indicating what he had never before thought of observing — a most unmistakable expression of passionate love,

"Can the girl love me?" he thought. "I hope not," he continued to muse, "it would indeed be a misfortune if the child had thrown her heart away upon one who never

could return her love,—yes, love, which I see would be no slight feeling in her passionate nature.”

But now he saw that Linda was weeping. “Oh! don’t go, Norman to-morrow; just stay one day to make me happy.”

“I cannot, Linda, but I will come again very soon. For Heaven’s sake don’t weep; it makes me more than ever wretched to see tears from your innocent eyes, dear little cousin.”

And with really affectionate brotherly kindness, and no vestige of any other feeling, he put his arm round her waist, and, drawing her towards him, kissed her.

“I will come again, and then you will be my comforter, and assist to drive away this dreadful sorrow, which now so abjectly drags me to the earth. You will be a real sister to me, Linda, will you not?”

“Yes, I will, Norman,” she sobbed forth, “I would do anything for you—lay down my life, if it would benefit you.”

Oh, poor Linda! little could you imagine what direful troubles those words, poured forth from your loving heart, would bring upon you!

And thus they parted. The guests were all departing, and Linda flew unobserved to the solitude of her own room, there to weep unheeded.

CHAPTER IX.

CAR returned home in a most perturbed state of mind. The glimpse she had caught of Norman Lawless had acted as a shock to her system, reviving in her mind all the old memories of her hitherto undisturbed life of careless pleasure, and of never ceasing adulation.

The present vapid existence had made her remember with keen regret her injured lover's ardent attentions. Indeed, now that she had by her bad conduct forfeited his regard, the fervour of his manly love, his real devotion, had often and often caused her to execrate her own folly in having thus betrayed and lost him.

She could shed tears of rage over her own

misdemeanours, which had thus ruined her pleasant prospects, and she could, in her present mood, even accuse Lord Glendinnon, in no measured terms, as the cause of her present unhappiness. And now she had seen her ardent lover again, the girl was certainly in a pitiable state of repentant regret.

How could she live and bear this life of slow torture,—this existence of horrible dulness? Sir Hector was in London, therefore the family kept school-room hours, Lady Julia still confined, for the most part of the day, to her dressing-room.

Oh! those meals,—those meals! how she hated them! A row of children headed by an acid-looking governess, pinafores and rice-puddings the order of the day. Car looked indeed a creature completely out of its element amongst them; and as this afternoon she took her seat at tea, her red eyes and woe-begone look, occasionally raised into petulant impatience, as a request was

made by one of the young ones to "pass the bread and butter," savoured little of the former joyous and sprightly bearing of the vivacious Caroline.

And then she had to go and sit in Lady Julia's dressing-room—that was worse than all to-night.

"What have I to say to Mamma this evening? Not one word that she would like to hear. If I began by my little fun with that stupid Hale, she would be shocked, and if I told her I had seen Captain Lawless, I should probably either hear her groan, thinking of my sins in that quarter, or she would commence a sermon, which would soon be interrupted by her tears. Poor Mamma is too nervous to be able to lecture me now-a-days. Heigho! heigho! Yes, I know that I am a very troublesome wretch, but what can I do? It is my nature, and the fact is I am not fit to live with my family; I am of a totally different species from any of them, and I often think I must

have been changed at my birth. Oh! if I had but behaved myself, and married Norman Lawless, it would have been a blessing for all parties; for Heaven knows what will become of me, and what I may not do if—if—only the temptation ever comes before me.”

Caroline went, as usual, into her mother’s sitting-room, to pass the rest of the tedious evening,—Geraldine already there, seated close to the sofa, with a book in her hand, reading to Lady Julia. Car took her seat by the window, and was soon lost in the deepest reverie; and as she mused, her countenance might be seen by degrees to clear, the pale cheeks to resume their brightness, and smiles to play round her mouth.

“Yes,” she thought, “*at any rate I’ll try.*”

The next day was bright and fine.

“Is Mamma going to drive this afternoon?” Car asked of her sister.

"Yes, she says she thinks she will leave her cards upon the Bosanquets, for they have been very civil, in sending very often to inquire after her."

"Are you going with her?"

"No; Mamma thought of taking Nelson, and Charlie as he has not been well."

"What a bore it is that I am not to ride when Papa is away! What next, I wonder? Upon my word the manner in which I am treated is quite enough to drive me to some act of desperation."

"Oh! Car," was Geraldine's shocked answer.

"Yes, I mean what I say; I can bear this no longer, and I shall tell Papa so when he returns. I'm kept up here like a prisoner or a lunatic, watched day and night; but I'm determined to ride to-day, if it is only on one of the children's ponies."

"Oh! that of course you can do, if you keep to the park and woods; but, Car, with Captain Lawless in the neighbourhood, you

surely would not wish to run the risk of meeting him."

"Gerry, excuse my answering; you know my opinion of you,—worthy, but *wholly* lacking sense, at least according to *my* meaning of the word."

That afternoon she sallied forth upon one of the little ponies, accompanied by a small brother. What was her intent or purpose, we cannot exactly say. One reason certainly was to escape meeting Mr. Hale. No, she had "other fish to fry," and had given him up for ever and for aye.

They galloped about the park for some short time, and then disappeared into the wood.

"Oh! Car, this is a stupid way to go," the boy began, "we can't gallop here."

"No; but, Georgie, they won't let me go out of the grounds; they think me a naughty girl, and not fit to go alone."

The boy laughed, but did not contradict the assertion, and said,

“ Yes, I dare say you are naughty, Car ; indeed I know you are, but——”

“But what? you impertinent little atom!”

The boy added, his eyes twinkling with fun, “ You ride like a good un, and people say that you are a right-down handsome girl, and that’s what you like best, isn’t it, Car ?”

Car did not know whether to like it or not, and turned rather red ; however, she laughed, and said,

“ And what else do they say about me, monkey?”

“ Oh ! they say you are the fastest party going, and I heard all the stablemen declare, when you —— ”

“ Oh ! never mind what the stablemen say,” Car interrupted impatiently, giving the pony a sharp stroke with her whip, and, notwithstanding the narrow path, urging it into a brisk trot, which soon brought them out of the wood upon the borders of a common.

"Now we'll have a scamper, Car," the boy exclaimed, and away they went at the full speed of the two little steeds; all four, including the ponies, enjoying to the utmost the fresh air and the liberty of the moment.

Farther, and farther they flew, till suddenly Car pulled up, for she found they were coming close upon an encampment of gipsies, and if they did not slacken their pace, they might possibly annihilate some of the numerous brats of all ages, who were sprawling on the turf, close to the tents.

They had scarcely turned their ponies' heads in another direction, when they were accosted by a gipsy woman, who had run after them, and was asking Car to allow her to tell her fortune.

"Yes, pretty lady, stop a bit and let me tell you all about *him*, the pretty gentleman who is not far off."

"What do you mean?" Car quickly replied, reining in her pony.

"Oh! just let me see the palm of that lily-white hand, and let me cross it with a bit of silver, and I'll tell you whether he be dark or fair——"

"But I have no money with me," Car said.

"I have," said Georgie, "Mamma gave me a shilling this morning. I'll lend it to you, Car, if you will promise faithfully to pay me back the moment we get home; it will be rather fun to hear what the woman will say."

And producing the shilling from the recesses of a pocket filled with a heterogeneous collection of articles, he presented it to the gipsy, who immediately proceeded to read the lines in the young lady's hand.

"Oh! but it is not all right here," exclaimed the sibyl, after a grave examination of the palm; "these lines are strangely crossed," and she looked up with a scrutinising gaze into Car's face, which was beaming

with curiosity and interest. "Yes, pretty lady, those bright eyes were born to make many a heart bleed; and the pretty gentleman with the fair skin and blue eyes, he who loves your beautiful face so dearly,—haven't you given him many a troublous hour?"

Car of course laughed, and there was an affirmative in that silvery sound, which assisted the gipsy in her task.

"Oh! beware of the other one; there's mischief in his eye, lady. I can see danger in that crooked line, and sorrow too, and sighing, such as you have never yet known. Shun him, pretty one, and give your heart to your true love,—the winsome lad with the bright locks and the sad countenance."

Gipsies are shrewd beyond our imagination. Accustomed to read the countenances of those who allow themselves to be inveigled into listening to their fictitious knowledge, they become skilful physiognomists, and their crafty cleverness can elicit

information out of every expression of a face submitting to the ordeal of their pretended *clairvoyance*.

This gipsy woman was an adept in her art, and years had gained for her experience. She had also a clue to go by, having only a few minutes before waylaid Norman Lawless, who had been taking a solitary saunter, a gun in his hand as an excuse, on the common which skirted the estate of "The Laurels." The gipsy woman had insisted upon telling his fortune, and soon seeing, by the unsettled look of the young man, that his mind was anything but at ease, forthwith arranged a story which, with its random "hits," touched many of the wounds of his heart.

"Yes, pretty lady," the woman continued, as she looked first at the soft palm, and then into the face of the girl, and noted the expression of her eyes and of her rosy mouth, "you must beware of the pitfalls in your path, and if you do

not lay hold of a strong arm soon to guard your steps, these crooked lines show plainly that an enemy will spring up. Oh! never heed, beautiful lady, if there is one who has a soft tongue and a hawk's eye, he's dangerous anyhow, sweet one! It is not the great folks of this earth who are the truest of lovers; you may have riches and power, but what are they compared to a true young heart, which beats so wildly for you?"

Car's bright look had rather changed whilst she listened to the woman's words. She felt rather nervous at the idea of what she might tell next; so saying, "That will do, good woman; I don't want to hear any more," she touched her pony with the whip and cantered off, looking graver than was her wont, for she was thinking how true was all the woman had said, and how she longed just once more to meet Norman Lawless, and try, at any rate, if she could not——

Do what ? we wonder.

Again ensnare the affections of the young
man by her witchery.

And the opportunity soon occurred.

CHAPTER X.

NORMAN LAWLESS, when he had so abruptly left Lough Rea, returned at once to London, and pleading ill health, to which his haggard looks gave instant credence, obtained leave to absent himself from his regiment for a fortnight. Reckless as to where he went, he was persuaded by a man of his acquaintance to accompany him to Paris,—and when there, with a kind of savage desperation, he plunged at once into every kind of dissipation, incentives to which were so easily found in that city of pleasure and refinement in iniquity. What cared he how he spent the time, so for the moment his senses were drowned in oblivion of his galling wound,—that wound

still so agonising, which even the known perfidy of her who had inflicted it would not heal.

No, though he knew that Car Eversfield was wholly unworthy, that she cared not for him,—nay even preferred another,—the infatuated man still loved to distraction, to the prostration of his very soul.

After a fortnight's career of dissipation, frightful to contemplate, Norman returned to his regiment so little improved in looks by his trip, indeed looking so frightfully ill, that it was with no surprise his brother officers heard he was confined to Grosvenor Square, where he generally took up his quarters, with a severe nervous attack, almost amounting to fever.

He was peremptory in his orders that his family should not be apprised of his illness; it would only make him worse, if his mother came to him. Asheton was quite sufficient as a nurse; and this kind friend was unremitting in his attentions to his friend, whom,

though unsuited to him in every way, he still for old acquaintance sake regarded. Captain Asheton was perfectly aware of the state of Norman Lawless's mind with regard to Car Eversfield; indeed the story had been confided to him by the injured man, and Asheton knew well that nothing he could say or do would be of any use,—time and circumstances would alone change the strong bias of this impetuous young man's mind; the image of the worthless, perfidious Car was still too vividly stamped upon his mind, and even weeks of illness had not weakened the fire which burnt so fiercely in his heart.

His thoughtful, serious friend looked forward with painful anticipations to the future career of this self-willed young man, ever so ungovernable in all his impulses.

Soon after Lawless had issued from his sick room, young Bosanquet, a brother officer, invited him to join a shooting party

at The Laurels, and Norman, to the surprise of Asheton, at once accepted it.

Did he know its vicinity to Everslee?

And he had again seen Car, and how?

Not as the bright, blooming, joyous enchantress of old, but with cheeks bedewed by tears—yes, Car weeping!

Merciful powers, what a revulsion the sight caused in his whole system! He could have leaped from his horse, and taken her that moment to his heart, knelt to her, implored her only to smile once more. Car in tears,—his beautiful, his adored! All her sins were at once forgotten—nothing remained save the remembrance of those indeed most “idle tears.”

But he had to ride on, and what was worse, to listen to the chatter of one of the Miss Bosanquets, by whose side he was riding.

“Oh! did you see the Miss Eversfields, Captain Lawless?” she exclaimed; “the one with the small hat, you know, is, my

brother says, the fastest girl in London,—such a flirt and such a jilt.” And then the young lady stopped suddenly, for it glanced across her mind that she had heard something about an affair between her and Captain Lawless.

He answered not a word, but with feelings of smothered rage, heard many a remark amongst the riding party directed towards this girl, to whom, to his shame, the infatuated young man still was bound with fetters he had not the power to shake off. He had no definite idea what he should do, but his abstracted looks, his haggard countenance that evening, made young Bosanquet fear the nervous attack was about to return; and the next morning his appearance had not improved, so that it created no surprise when he declined joining the large shooting party in the coverts, saying that he would stroll alone with his gun, as there were, he knew, some coveys of birds in a particular field; he did not

feel up to a very long day's shooting. And having got rid of the rest of the party, with a feeling of relief he hastily turned his steps onwards—in what direction he cared not, but soon found himself upon the picturesque common adjacent to The Laurels and to Everslee.

It was a delicious autumn day, the perfumed turf emitting the odours of its wild flowers. All nature seemed to smile, mocking with its brightness the distempered mind of Norman Lawless, who, after, with impatient steps, having for some time traversed the moor, at length threw himself wearily down upon the soft green earth, casting his gun on one side, whilst he gave himself up to his distorted imaginings.

And there he was startled by the voice of the same gipsy woman who afterwards accosted Car, the weird sibyl, who had stealthily been watching his movements, and thereby had formed her own conclusions upon his state of mind.

Nothing, she thought, but crossed love could make one like him so impatiently wretched,—so handsome, and so grand-looking, it must be that he had everything his own way, but one perhaps. Oh! that one thing which money and power will not always purchase,—the slippery heart of a young maiden!

The gipsy began by accosting him in her usual way, and an impatient "Go away" was the first notice she received. But the woman was not so easily repulsed; she went on, saying—"Doesn't the pretty gentleman wish to hear a word of his lady-love?—the beautiful lady who pretends sometimes to look coldly at him, but who is only making believe all the time."

Norman started and looked round at the keen face of the speaker, and then, raising himself upon his elbow, again said, but less harshly, "Did I not tell you to go away?"

"I will go away after I have had a look at your bonny white hand, and have crossed

it with a bit of silver, and put some heart into you. Pretty gentleman, come," she continued, seeing that Lawless looked irresolute; "I will tell you beforehand the colour of her eyes; yes, those beautiful eyes, so dark and so bright, which shine like stars in the deep blue sky."

Norman's fingers were now in his waistcoat pocket, and looking half-ashamed, he produced half-a-crown, and gave it to the gipsy, who began immediately in grave earnest to perform her task.

These people have a theory of their own to go by, and as she looked at the hand held in hers, and then turned her eyes on the agitated face of the young man, who, in his present morbid state, was with wild distended eyes watching her, as if his fate depended upon her words, the woman thought, "Well, I had better not say what I see here, or this handsome young chap will be mayhap shooting that gun either at me, or at his own self. Oh! lawk, what mischief I could tell of ——"

So she concocted her tale, in as soothing a manner as she could, saying "Faint heart never won fair lady," and that many things that looked black turned out all right; she told him to beware of a dark man, and not to let the grass grow under his feet, that there was one who had shed many a tear for him, that what was to be done had better be done quickly, for there was "many a slip between the cup and the lip," and so forth.

Norman Lawless, disgusted with himself for even listening for one moment to all the nonsense she was talking, still felt happier when the woman had left him, after having elicited another half-crown from the waist-coat pocket. "Poor young fellow," she mused as she went her way, pleased with her successful day's work, "if there's not trouble and confusion coming on in that quarter, I know little of my trade; but I had not the heart to tell him so, and I have an inkling of who it is that is playing him false, and breaking his heart; that

beautiful young lady at the park, whom I have seen scores of times making eyes at the young curate, worst taste in her ; and did I not see her as she came out of the lane t'other day, when the gentleman and lady passed on horseback, crying as if her heart would break ? Yes, I see it all, and bad luck it will be from beginning to end."

Norman, roused in a degree from his listlessness after half an hour had elapsed, began to think that he had better try to find some game before he returned to The Laurels, and walked on, intending to go into the turnip field, where partridges abounded ; but on his way, a rabbit happening to cross his path, he fired at it.

The next moment a scream startled his attention, and looking round, he saw at some distance two ponies, both without riders, for a lady had jumped from one, and was bending over a boy, who was lying on the ground.

The report of the gun had caused

Georgie's pony to start violently, and the unexpected shock had precipitated the boy over its head. In another moment Norman had joined the party, at first unconscious whom he should find, and there he saw Car kneeling by the side of her brother, who had been stunned by the fright and fall, in all the agonies of sorrow and affright, imagining, from his pale countenance, that the boy was dead. So genuine was now her anguish, that even the appearance of Norman made no further impression upon her than joy that some one was at hand to help her.

"Oh! Norman, Norman," she cried as she rushed to him, and clung to his arm, tears and sobs breaking forth, "say, for God's sake say, is he killed? My little brother! Oh, Mamma, Mamma, and she will think it is all my doing!"

Lawless raised the child in his arms. "He is only stunned," he said quietly, and taking from his pocket a flask, he poured

some sherry down Georgie's throat, and very soon his colour began to return to his white face, his eyes to open, and he said petulantly, "Don't make such a row, Car, or they'll never let me ride again, I've only had a spill," and the brave little fellow struggled to free himself from Norman's arms, but he was still faint and shaken.

And now Car's excitement took a new turn, delight at the boy's recovery, she imagined from actual death.

"Oh, Georgie, Georgie, darling Georgie!" she cried, kissing and fondling the boy; and then—for the first time since the accident, so sincere had been her affright—she thought of herself.

Oh, what an opportunity!

And the impulsive, reckless creature, who had been kneeling by the side of the man she had so deeply offended, assisting in recovering the boy, now, still retaining that posture, seized his hand, pressing it to her lips, her heart, exclaiming, in those

magnetic tones, of hers, her beautiful eyes looking so beseechingly through her tears, "Norman, Norman, you have saved the boy! how can I thank you enough? And oh, Norman, will you—can you forgive me?"

The young man gazed fixedly on the tempter; and whilst gazing, remembrances of a moonlit scene,—of deeds, of words, which had sunk so deep, and had festered in his heart,—rose up before him, casting a disenchanting shadow even over the adored one who so humbly supplicated at his feet.

"Forgive you, Car?" he gloomily replied. "Can you think for a moment that is possible? My memory is a retentive one." And he strove to withdraw his hand, although his heart was beating hard with the suppressed emotions with which it was filled.

And Car, covering her face with her hands, continued to weep whilst she murmured,—

"I have deserved this from you, Norman. I am quite aware of all the contempt and hatred I merit from your hands ; but, oh ! if you could only know how wretched I have been, at least you would pity me."

Norman was speechless—deadly pale; he sat still, holding the boy in his arms.

"It was inexcusable, I well know; but it was done in folly, not wickedness," she continued.

"Oh ! do not try to extenuate any part of your conduct," now indignantly cried Norman. "And, Miss Eversfield, as your brother is so much better, he had better be taken home. I will lead his pony, for he seems a good deal shaken."

"Yes, Car, I am all right now ; only a little shaky. What are you making such a fuss about, kneeling there, crying in that way? What a baby you are!"

And he went to her, and tried to pull her tear-stained face towards him,—she, really nervous and excited, the shock of Georgie's

accident, and the sudden meeting with her former lover having quite upset her, threw her arms round the boy, and wept more bitterly than ever.

And Norman watched her with sensations of the most mixed nature—passionate love, but fierce anger, distrust, and repellant recollections, causing a revulsion of feeling, which held him back from rushing headlong into the snare of her fascination.

He had even, with seeming calmness, assisted Car to mount her pony; and then, lifting the boy on his, he holding the bridle, led it gently towards Everslee.

Not a word did he speak to her. Little Georgie, now himself again, was the spokesman, and was loud in his entreaties that Car should not tell of the adventure.

“We’ll go to the stables, Captain Lawless, and then no one will see us,” the boy said; “and, Car, pray don’t go to mamma with those red eyes, or you will frighten her to death. How silly of you to cry; don’t

you think so, Captain Lawless?—but girls are so fond of blubbering.”

And thus they went on, until they were on the point of emerging from the wood, and entering the park, and Car in desperation, for with affright she now feared that indeed her former admirer was finally lost to her, said faintly,—

“Captain Lawless, come here for one moment,” and Norman was immediately by her side.

“I must see you again; I cannot live without your forgiveness—only once; and then when we meet next, it shall be as utter strangers.”

“Of course, Miss Eversfield, if *you* wish it. But where am I to have the honour of seeing you?—am I to call at Everslee?”

How tumultuously and rapturously the blood rushed into the infatuated young man’s heart, but still he maintained a cold demeanour.

"Oh no; I will be in this wood to-morrow, at eleven o'clock."

"You shall be obeyed," he said; "and now you are so near home, and your brother so perfectly recovered, I will leave you;" and taking off his hat to Car, and shaking hands with Georgie, he turned back into the wood, on his return to the Laurels, bearing with him a countenance of very changed expression.

Of course Car had to account for her own swollen eyes when she returned home, and to tell Mrs. Nelson about Georgie's fall; and the doctor, who happened to be there at the time, visiting Lady Julia, was consulted, and pronounced that no harm was done, so Lady Julia was to hear nothing of his accident.

"But, Miss Car, what is this Master Georgie tells me about your meeting Captain Lawless?" Nelson asked anxiously, as she noted the girl's disturbed countenance.

"What is it, nursey!" Car exclaimed, throwing her arms round her neck, "I am the most unfortunate girl in the world. I have lost him; and I feel that I should have been so happy if I had married him; and now I really believe he hates me."

"Well, Miss Caroline, and do you believe he could do otherwise, after your conduct?"

What could Car say for herself? She was too much subdued to argue the point as usual. But she thought, "Well, to-morrow will decide my fate; and how thin and pale he has become, poor fellow! I really believe it is all on my account; but cold and stern as he looked—still—still—yes, I feel almost sure, somehow or another, that he still loves me in his heart; although, of course, he must be very—oh! how dreadfully disgusted with me!"

And Car was totally unlike herself the rest of the day—pale and full of thought;

and when at breakfast the next morning her aspect had not changed, Geraldine looked at her with anxiety, but asked no questions.

CHAPTER XI.

CAR knew that at eleven o'clock all the different branches of the family were generally disposed of. It was again a fine bright morning when the girl slipped out of the house unperceived, and walked quickly, though stealthily, towards the wood.

She was not at all like the usually radiant Car ; but pale, her countenance full of anxiety, and her heart beating fast. Yes, she had a stake to accomplish. Now or never.

"I must make my peace with Norman, and marry him, or have to drag on an existence for the future, which will be worse than death. Did I not hear papa

say that he had all but sold the house in London ? This country life would end in suicide, I am sure ; and really, I like Norman,—I did not know how much till I lost him. Oh, that Lord Glendinnon !—why did he ever cross my path ? ”

And even now ; and with those resolves the wretched girl heaved a heavy sigh. And what caused it ?

She was now in the wood. Not long had she to wait. Car instantly perceived a tall figure leaning against a tree, and advancing with trembling steps, she confronted Lawless.

“ Oh, Captain Lawless, it is very kind of you to come. I feared you would not. But let us walk this way,” she said hurriedly ; “ perhaps it will be better to go into a less public part of the wood.”

“ As you please,” was the seemingly indifferent answer ; and Car diverged into a path which led up a steep acclivity to a part of the wood, thick and impervious to those

from without, and where, amongst the clustering foliage of the autumn shrubs, a space had been cleared and a rustic seat placed.

We are not going to enter into the particulars of this scene.

Norman Lawless's mind, during the hours which had elapsed since he met Car Eversfield, had gone through many changes. At one moment a firm resolve, a better judgment seemed to be gaining ascendancy over him.

He would not be so weak, so degenerate, to take back to his heart, as his future wife, a girl who, he had proof positive,—Oh! merciful powers, yes, though perhaps not wholly in deed, was in mind most certainly impure, false, perfidious, everything that was to be avoided in a wife. No, thank heavens, he had some self-respect left. But this promise to meet her,—what should he do?—and then, unfortunate young man, another mood imperceptibly

crept by degrees stronger and stronger over his senses. He looked upon his hand, that hand which had been pressed to her lips, to her heart, had been wetted by her tears.

And that piteous voice when she implored him to forgive her ; and he, what a brute he had been, how cruelly he had rejected those prayers for forgiveness ; and now he could tear his hair and gnash his teeth, when he thought of his barbarous conduct.

And so it went on, those alternate fits of prudent resolve, and fierce regret, and re-awakened passion, rendering his manner and demeanour so strange, that Mrs. Bosanquet remarked to her son—

“ Really, Herbert, I shall be glad when Captain Lawless is safe out of the house, for after what you told me of his nervous attack, I am rather frightened of your friend, he looks so strange. I hope he is not going mad.”

“ Upon my word, I do not know what to

make of him," Captain Bosanquet replied; "I believe it is all owing to that love-affair of his, with that abominable fast girl, Car Eversfield."

And certainly, when Norman Lawless went forth that morning to meet his perfidious love, his state was one of fearfully morbid excitement. Car soon found that she was by far the coolest, and, therefore, the strongest of the two. She had to encounter bursts of rage, of jealousy, reproaches, scorn. But she bore it all with wonderful meekness. She looked only to finally reaching the goal; she felt no tender outraged love to lash her feelings into frenzy; her heart was untouched, but still her object was to marry Norman Lawless; and to fail in this object would be a disappointment not to be endured. She really rather liked him; and then what was the alternative? No London—no society, and a country life, for ever and for aye.

And with such terrible *bêtes noires* in

prospect, what would she not have done to avert them! Even encounter something much less endurable than marrying this rich, handsome, ardent young lover.

Two hours had passed, and still they sat in this umbrageous retreat; but they had totally changed characters. The defiant look had passed from the young man's countenance. He was now the contrite, the adoring lover, all fierceness banished from the handsome face, intense love alone beaming from it; and in Car's, when first she had joined him so pale and agitated, nay, even humble, now flushed into brilliant colouring, sparkling triumph and exultation, its present expression.

She was then saying "But, Norman, what will Lady Curraghmore say? I know she is proud and ambitious. She will not think that I am good or grand enough for you."

"What care I for what she says?" Norman replied, scornfully. "I am not dependent upon her caprices, thank heaven!

When I am twenty-five I come into a fortune of some thousands a year, left by a relation ; and till then, if my Lady does not choose to be liberal, I can always manage to get plenty of money. At her death she cannot keep me out of the Scotch property ; and of course the Irish estates will be mine some of these days. No, my beautiful, my beloved," he continued, as he pressed her still closer with the arm already encircling her waist, more fervently to his heart, "you shall have everything this world can give ; and oh, Car, what quantities of love will be showered upon you ; and you will be happy in that love, will you not, my angel, my adored ?"

And Car really thought she should ; and her heart beat with much exultation, if not love. So well, indeed, did she enact her part, that even Lawless was perfectly satisfied, and it was only on hearing the school-room dinner-bell ring that the lovers concluded their interview, for Car said she must go,

for there would be an awful row if she were missing.

"Then I may come to Everslee the day after to-morrow?—you say Sir Hector returns to-morrow."

Permission was accorded; and after some few more lingering love-tokens, the again-engaged pair separated, and Car at length rushed into the dining-room, heated and flushed; and flinging her hat anywhere, sat down to the half-finished dinner. Every one exclaiming, "Where have you been, Car?"

And the governess, looking stiff and offended, added, "Yes, you are indeed very late, Miss Eversfield."

"I am late, Miss Fisher; however, I will not detain you long; anything will do. I am not hungry." And as Car commenced her slice of mutton, which was half cold, her inward ejaculation was,

"Thank goodness, leg-of-mutton dinners are nearly at an end for me."

CHAPTER XII.

NORMAN LAWLESS is again the acknowledged suitor of Car Eversfield. Sir Hector, with fear and trembling, has once more given his consent to the marriage.

Much did he say to his daughter, who sat by his side trying to look demure, and to listen to the grave words which flowed from her father's lips—and she did hear a chance one now and then, but soon, alas! poor man, they fell unheeded on her ear. Some far more amusing reverie had plunged her hearing faculties into oblivion, and if a qualm of conscience startled her for a moment to the recollection that her father was speaking, and his affectionate warnings for a brief space touched some chord of her

heart, lovingly she kissed him, murmuring, "I will, I will, dear pappy, you will see what a good little wife I shall be;" but the next moment again she was in dreamland, —perhaps deep in the arrangement of her *trousseau*, or some such vanity.

Car had to submit to be lectured from every quarter, but little cared she. Her temper was naturally easy, and her temperament so wholly careless and reckless, that as long as she had things all her own way, she was perfectly indifferent as to the opinion of others.

She was in the highest spirits, and certainly appeared as happy as a *fiancée* could possibly be; and it was a sight quite refreshing to see the young couple together, not a cloud seeming to dim the bright horizon of the moment.

Car never looked so beautiful, and Norman's countenance never had been so benignantly animated. All its fierceness had vanished, the most devoted love seemed to

have softened every feeling of his heart, every glance of his eye.

During the conversation in the wood, and before he had surrendered himself heart, and soul, into her hands, and accorded the forgiveness implored so beseechingly by Car, he had made one important stipulation—She must swear, not as she had done before—the false one—but by everything most sacred in heaven and on earth, that, if he forgave her, Lord Glendinnon must in future be to her as an utter stranger; and Car, horrified by the wild looks of the injured man, and feeling that her only chance with him was, without any reserve, to accede to all he demanded, in the excitement of the moment, on her very knees, repeated after him an oath awful from its solemnity, and it was not till then that Lawless had clasped the now pale and really agitated girl to his heart, bringing back by his fervent kisses the colour to her white lips and cheeks.

“Never, sweet Car, shall I again say one word upon this repellent subject; you have wiped it all away from my mind by your promise—your vow—and let us never, even in thought, revert to its unworthy remembrance.”

And all went on without a moment's ruffle on the smooth stream of their courtship.

Lawless pleaded for an early day. Car was nothing loath. The young man had, with the utmost indifference as to whether she liked it or not, written to inform his mother of his engagement. He also epistolised his father, saying:—

“DEAR GOVERNOR,

“I have taken your advice, and found a wife sufficiently beautiful to satisfy your highest ambition for your son—and good-tempered, too,—your advice went no farther, remember. She has not a penny—at least not without inconveniencing her father;

and I want nothing but herself. If my Lady does not choose to give me wherewithal to live respectably, why, she must let it alone. I can raise money on my expectations of old M'Kintock's legacy, which will be due in two years.

"Pray advise her Ladyship not to bother me by objections, they will only make bad blood between us. *You* will glory in my luck; only pray, respected pater, keep your hands off her, I beg. I believe you will be in love the moment you set eyes upon her; and you are such a devil of a Philanderer, to say nothing of your being the handsomest scapegrace going, that I should not wonder if I became jealous of you.

"Propitiate the old lady, who keeps such fast hold of the strings of the money-bag.

"And believe me, your *dutiful* son,

"NORMAN LAWLESS."

At Lough Rea the effect this communi-

cation occasioned may be easily imagined. To Lady Curraghmore it came as a thunder-bolt, annihilating every hope for the future for her only son. That girl to be his bride, her daughter-in-law! whose reputation was even tarnished to an irremediable extent.

For how was it possible to suppose that in such an establishment as Westover Castle, with so many eyes and ears always on the alert to hear and see with magnifying effect everything that went on, such a catastrophe as the moonlight walk and its results would not soon be the nine days' wonder—first whispered mysteriously, and finally bruited about, the rumour speedily announced publicly, and of a certainty exaggerated even into still more than its really repulsive form?

Lady Curraghmore had heard it all, and with malicious satisfaction had gloated over a story which had relieved her from

the dread which even she, with her obdurate mind, keenly felt, that Norman might become a prey to this unprincipled girl; and disagreeable as the lady was in disposition, person, and demeanour, we can readily enter into her feelings, and even pity her as a mother, when she read the following letter:—

“DEAR MOTHER,

“I am engaged to be married to Miss Eversfield. Do not trouble yourself to make any objections to the match. I have made up my mind, and no power on earth will change my resolve. As for money, thank heavens! I am independent on that score. Of course I shall be very happy to accept any amount of liberality from your hands; but should it not suit you to increase my allowance, I can easily borrow a few thousands to jog on with for the next two years, when I shall be entitled to old M’Kintoch’s money.

"As I said before, pray don't trouble yourself to give me any advice upon this point, for it is all settled.

"Your affectionate son,

"NORMAN LAWLESS."

The indignant mother was goaded to frenzy by this letter. Well, indeed, she knew the nature of her son.

No, it would be useless for her to attempt to avert this evil. But she could not succumb passively to so awful a calamity.

And that very same day Lady Curraghmore was on her way to London, after having wreaked her desperate anger on all around, her husband in particular, who, with his loose ideas on things in general, not looking upon this matter in so severe a light, and having, in compliance with Norman's request, ventured to propitiate his irritated lady by a few extenuating words, was ordered to be silent, and never

again to dare to excuse a deed upon which her curse would fall. She would see Norman, and if he still persisted in his determination to marry this girl, she would have nothing more to say to him.

And with these impotent resolves the almost frantic woman departed, leaving the rest of the party at Lough Rea sensibly relieved by the removal of her presence. But Linda, what did she feel, when her uncle informed her that Norman was going to make a fool of himself, and marry a girl who, though very beautiful, was not quite so good as she should be?

She turned very pale, and exclaimed,—

“Who is she, uncle?”

“Oh! her name is Car Eversfield. She is considered the fastest girl in London, and a jilt into the bargain.”

“‘The beautiful fiend!’” Linda ejaculated, clasping her hands, and looking the image of despair. “Oh, uncle,” she continued, in the greatest excitement, “cannot

it be averted—this dreadful calamity? She is, I know, a wicked girl. Norman called her ‘a beautiful fiend;’ and when he was here she had made him so wretched—he told me so.”

“Oh, my pretty Linda, never mind what he said then; no doubt they had been having a lover’s quarrel, the foolish young creatures! Perhaps Norman might have chosen more wisely; but, Linda, where there’s no love, there’s no happiness. And what would you have the boy do?—marry an ill-favoured, cross-grained woman? Oh, by my troth, there’s neither wisdom nor pleasure in such a business;—no, rather take a halter and hang yourself instead. I wish the girl had been a trifle steadier; but she is young and lovely as eye could wish to look upon; and, if she only loves the lad, she’ll mend, take my word for it,—so don’t be down-hearted, little darling,” the good-natured man added, drawing the

girl towards him, and looking into her face, white and now deluged with tears. "Faith! but I tell you what, Linda, I wish he had fancied you instead; and, now I think of it, he was very sweet upon you in that oriel window, whispering for ever so long."

"Oh, uncle!" exclaimed Linda, her pale, tearful face now rosy red, "what an idea! I do love Norman,—oh, how dearly I cannot say,—but I have always thought of him as a brother; and," she continued, the most fervent, animated expression irradiating her countenance, "I would give my last drop of blood to serve him in any way. What would I not do to prevent this dreadful marriage! for, uncle, you may depend upon it, that this girl is *most unworthy*."

"Oh, but she is handsome, my dear; and you little know how much a man will do for a beautiful woman. My Lady is gone off to see if she can talk Norman out

of this folly ; she might have saved herself the trouble—she never could bully *him* ! And oh, Linda, after all, won't it be a relief to have a pretty face to look at ? Till you came, little darling, faith ! were my eyes not starved at home ? I really believe I am a better man since I've had you to look at, Linda Mavourneen ! ”

But Lord Curraghmore's logic had no effect upon his niece, who was thoroughly wretched.

Her only comfort was Lady Curraghmore's absence, and her unmolested wanderings amidst the romantic environs of Lough Rea,—her cousin Margaret being fully occupied by the bride, Mrs. David Craigie, who was then visiting at the Castle.

Linda's stay in Scotland was prolonged from day to day, owing to Lady Elizabeth's protracted illness ; and, much as she could not but dislike the forbidding, austere, and chilling manners of Lady Curraghmore,

still there was a charm and attraction in this wild home of Norman's, and the warm, affectionate attention of her uncle, which reconciled her to the evident dislike invariably shown towards her by Lady Curraghmore, who very soon returned home, — her usually stern countenance more gloomy and ferocious than ever.

A terrible time it was for all those around, who were not quite callous to her appalling frowns, her awful words of condemnation.

Lord Curraghmore took it *aisily*, with the thoroughly careless *insouciance* of his native country.

“You have no need to look so pale and so scared, little darling,” he would say to Linda, who sometimes felt terrified at the effect some insulting speech might produce upon her uncle, uttered by his wife. “I’m used to it — as the lobster said when it was being boiled alive. I care not a straw for my Lady’s hard words — indeed, I like

them far better than her soft ones," and his Lordship made a face expressive of disgust. "Things are come between us just to the pass most endurable to me. We do not pretend to do aught but hate each other, and now I can exist in peace."

"An extraordinary kind of peace!" Linda thought.

* * * * *

The wooing at Eversfield sped on merrily; the wedding was to take place without delay. Norman's interview with his mother had been, of course, a most stormy one, but ending, as usual in such cases, with no good results,—the violent tempers of both only producing a scene of recrimination too dreadful to contemplate: a mother and her son bandying words, repulsive, unnatural, and sinful in their abusive significance.

"Now, Lady Curraghmore, I have told you my fixed determination. As for your money, you may keep it all as long as you

can—I wish for none of it. But just remember, that if you presume to write one insulting word to any of the Eversfield family, you never see my face again; and think not that anything you can say or do will prevent the marriage,—no, I can tell you that neither father nor mother, nor any man or woman on earth, shall ever stand between me and my intended wife.”

And thus they parted.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was now late in the month of October. Sir Hector had a maiden sister, who lived in a pretty, tiny house in South Street. It was decided that to her care Car was to be consigned, in order that she might try on her dresses, and give orders, under the superintendence of this precise elderly aunt, with regard to the business of her *trousseau*.

No letter had arrived from Lady Curraghmore upon the subject of the marriage; but Lord Curraghmore had, by order of his son, despatched a very characteristic epistle, warmly welcoming his son's choice as his daughter-in-law, and descanting in enthusiastic terms on his admiration of her beauty.

"Is it not strange that Norman's mother does not write one line of approval or sanction to her son's marriage? I fear, dear Hector, she does not like the idea of our wild Car becoming the wife of her only son—and how can I wonder?" For the poor invalid mother's heart sank when she thought upon her child,—very dear with all her glaring imperfections.

"Lady Curraghmore is a hard, purse-proud, and very prejudiced woman," Sir Hector replied; "but Norman assures me that Car shall never be made unhappy by her interference or temper. I begin to like the ardent young man extremely, do you not, Julia?"

"Yes, there is something very winning about the young man," Lady Julia replied; "it is refreshing to witness such genuine love, and in any other hands——"

"Oh, my dear wife, pray don't let us always harp upon that string; for heaven's sake let us try to forget bygones, and en-

deavour to look forward with at least hope. Car seems completely in earnest now — as much in love as we could wish to see her.”

“Yes,” said Lady Julia; but at the same time she heaved a very desponding sigh.

“My dear Julia, you almost provoke me; you never can think even leniently of poor Car.”

“Well, Hector, you must bear with me; you know I am very weak, both in mind and body, and I cannot help giving way to all sorts of nervous dreads and fancies, — in short, it will be impossible for me to feel at ease until it is all over, and Car actually married. So hasten matters as much as possible, I implore you. I don’t like the idea of Norman having to go to Ireland.”

“He only goes to just see his company settled in their quarters, and return immediately; in the meantime, depend upon it, Aunt Jane will look sharp after Car. Although, really, I cannot imagine what mischief can happen now.” And a thought

glanced through his mind, which although it caused a dark frown to pass over his usually benignant countenance, gave him at the same time a feeling of relief; he knew that Lord Glendinning was safe out of the country, gone, in short, to Italy. So after parting with Lawless, now more devotedly in love than ever, her abject slave, her adoring worshipper, and towards whom she really began to feel some reciprocity of feeling, her father escorted Car to London, and placed her under the charge of Miss Eversfield, generally called Aunt Jane, a very prim, methodical, but kind-hearted woman, of between forty and fifty, who promised faithfully not to lose sight of her niece, with whose flighty disposition she was well acquainted. Too glad she was to give every assistance in her power to her brother and Lady Julia, to whom she was warmly attached, and whom she sincerely compassionated.

“And what a blessing it will be when

the dear girl is safe in the hands of a husband," was her constant ejaculation.

There was much to be done, the *trousseau* to be hastened, and all the necessary preparations attending a wedding. Oh! how constantly Miss Eversfield's door-bell (which had till now spent such a quiet time of it) caused the man-servant, grown fat and lazy, and not accustomed to such never-ceasing calls upon his legs, and patience, to attend the summons of Miss Caroline's tradespeople! How henceforth would he loathe the sight of a mantua maker's or a milliner's basket!

The neat little mansion was turned completely topsy-turvy, every small room beginning to be strewn with some signs of the approaching event, but the aunt bore it at first with wonderful patience.

It will soon be over, and then, oh! will it not be a blessing that Car will be married and settled for life. What a girl she is—how trying to one's patience! Certainly the

young lady did not spare her aunt or any of her servants. She gave no end of unnecessary trouble. In the most exuberant state of wild spirits, never still for one moment, insisting upon always doing something, whether necessary or unnecessary, making the house ring with her incessant chattering and musical peals of laughter, flying like a whirlwind up and down stairs, eternally rushing into the drawing-room, to show some new article of dress or a most becoming little bonnet just arrived from Paris, or some such thing. No wonder that poor Aunt Jane, at a week's end, looked worn and jaded, and began to question if she could possibly endure all this much longer, particularly as one of her duties consisted in having to sit some hours in Mr. ——'s studio, whilst a large full length picture was in progress, insisted upon by Norman Lawless, who, before he started for Ireland, had settled with the distinguished artist all about the attitude, dress, &c.

The smell of the oil paints disagreed terribly with the unfortunate spinster, and she felt so certain that she should soon be laid up, with one of her bilious attacks, that she wrote to beg that Sir Hector would come up to London immediately, or send Geraldine to assist in taking care of Car; Miss Eversfield having full reliance on the superior steadiness and good sense of her second niece.

But alas! neither of them could leave Everslee, Lady Julia being more than usually ill. Poor Miss Eversfield, what could she do? for very shortly after she was powerless even to think, being laid low with one of those sick headaches which prove no respecter of persons or circumstances; and which render the most unselfish of mortals insensible, for the time, to every consideration save their own sufferings. So Car was left to the sole chaperonage of Mademoiselle Louise.

* * * * *

In a dressing-room belonging to a stately mansion in Piccadilly, Lord Glendinnon was making his morning toilet, assisted by the valet and prime minister to his pleasures, Pietro Courtier.

His Lordship does not seem, by the ferocious appearance of his countenance, and his impatient gestures and harsh words towards his obsequious attendant, to be in the most benign of humours, and no wonder !

He had advanced far on his journey to Italy, with metal most attractive awaiting his arrival in Rome—a fair lady who had preceded him by some few weeks, business at the last moment having detained him in London—when a telegram reached him, informing his Lordship that Lady Glendinnon was on her death-bed, and begged, as a dying request, to have a parting interview with her recreant spouse.

This intelligence certainly occasioned no pang to his conjugal feelings ; he only, we

fear, added some not very flattering wishes that this had happened a few days' earlier, when he should have been on the spot to have attended to her most absurd demand.

However, there was nothing for him but to retrace his steps to England ; for, on the death of her Ladyship, he was aware there would be business to transact which might require his presence. So go he must.

Poor Lady Glendinnon!—her husband had always hated her, and certainly his feelings did not soften towards his neglected wife even at this juncture, when he knew that she was suffering upon a bed of death.

We may imagine then what must have been his feelings on his arrival in London, after a hurried and most fatiguing journey, to hear that the invalid had rallied from her last attack, much to the surprise of all the medical attendants, and was quite out of danger, for the present at least.

It was the morning but one after his return to London that we now find Lord

Glendinnon still chafing with rage and vexation, and with curses, deep though not loud, execrating everything and everybody connected with his present misadventure.

And Courtier, the valet, who understood the management of his lord and master to perfection, went on his way with his usual address, stealthily watching Lord Glendinnon's countenance until he saw that the gloom was less portentous, and that he might throw in a word, which might perchance turn the current of his disturbed thoughts into a more amusing channel.

This Frenchman had been for years in the Earl's service, and from being at first a necessary evil, had become a privileged person—one of the pernicious effects of allowing a servant to be the domestic panderer to a man's vices. The tyranny of a confidential servant is certainly the most arbitrary of dominations.

Courtier was well aware Lord Glendinnon could not do without him, that he was

as indispensable as the unlimited exchequer of his Lord, and so he acted upon that presumption.

"Who do you think, milord, I met this morning, as early as ten o'clock, walking with her maid? Not the *vieille fille* who was at Westover Castle, but a pretty little compatriot of mine (that I could at once see by her whole *tournure*), and with that beautiful mademoiselle, Miss Eversfield."

Lord Glendinning's countenance, Courtier saw at once, assumed an air of interest, although he said petulantly,

"Well! what's that to me?"

"Oh, no, milord, nothing, I know; but it so charmed me to see that young lady *si belle, belle comme un ange*, who, when I last saw her, was in such great despair, in floods of tears, in such sorrow; now looking so fresh and gay: *ma foi*, it made even old Courtier's heart beat to look at her as she passed; smiles upon her rosy lips, her eyes dancing seemingly with joy; but she is to marry

that fine young handsome Captain Lawless immediately, I hear. So no wonder!"

We suppose Courtier was using counter-irritation to suit his Lordship's present state. He could see that his arrow had hit the mark; for a shade of deep red crossed Lord Glendinnon's face, and a fierce gleam shot from his eyes. He spoke not, however, until he had completed his toilet, and then said,

"Make it your business to get acquainted with the French maid. I have heard of her, and her name is Mademoiselle Louise. I expect to hear, when I dress for dinner, everything relating to Miss Eversfield's plans and whereabouts."

"I will endeavour to obey your Lordship's order: but it will be no easy affair, in this great London, and Sir Hector's house at Bayswater, they tell me, is sold; however I will do my best; but, milord, I thought your Lordship was going to leave

London this evening, you told me so just one moment ago."

"But I have changed my mind, so do what I desire, and don't presume to ask questions."

CHAPTER XIV.

It so happened that Lord Glendinnon, this time, was beforehand with Courtier in making the discovery just now his end and aim. Strange to say, for a man of his temperament and habits, Car Eversfield had not been forgotten. There was something about the fresh beauty of the girl, and her evident unbounded admiration of himself, which had wonderfully taken hold of his fancy.

And there was something in the unattainableness of her position, to this man whose practice had always been, both in war and love in the *veni, vidi, vici* line, which probably galled him in the most

vulnerable parts of his character, his acquisitiveness and self-love.

It was, therefore, with a sensation of fierce disgust, savouring of black envy, that he heard that, after all he had done to prevent it, this splendid creature was to be won and worn by that boy, Norman Lawless.

However, it is not to be supposed that Lord Glendinnon had been idle in his pursuit of pleasure and excitement since his Westover exploits. He had formed a new *liaison*—some very beautiful woman of course ; and relieving his pique and envious feelings by predicting (when the intelligence that the marriage was again on the tapis reached his ear) anything but a flowery path of connubial felicity for the re-engaged couple, he endeavoured to put the matter out of his mind, after having given full vent to his spleen.

“That presumptuous idiot!—does he imagine that he can ever manage Car

Eversfield—she who never did, nor ever will care one rush about him—the white-faced puppy! No! a pretty dance she will lead the young fool. And to think that such a glorious creature should be wasted upon him! Yes, an enviable *ménage* it will be, surely,” and his lordship smiled sardonically. “I should like to murder the fellow, if it would not be doing him too great a benefit, for his life will be slow torture, a daily death of jealousy and revengeful agony.”

We have softened, for the sake of our readers, the denunciations which passed through Lord Glendinning’s mind when he heard of Car’s approaching marriage announced in the public papers.

And now his mood had again changed, those words of Courtier, the tempter, rang in his ears,—the beautiful girl, whose image had clung so tenaciously to his memory—that moonlight interview * * * and * * * but we will not enter into

the remembrance and the reflections which they brought back, with such demoniacal feelings, to the vitiated mind of this polluted man of sin.

Poor, wretched Car, and far more wretched parents !

* * * * *

Lord Glendinnon had entered one of his clubs; he was in search of a person whom he expected to find there, but being disappointed in his object, he threw himself impetuously into an arm-chair, and began reading a newspaper.

Whilst thus employed, his ears caught some words of a conversation, spoken in an under tone, between two gentlemen seated not far off.

“ So, that match is really to come off? I am glad of it, for poor Eversfield’s sake.”

“ Yes,” was the answer ; “ that is to say, if they can bring her to the scratch, but you know that girl is a very slippery hand.”

“ She certainly is a beautiful creature. I

saw her a few days ago, with that unfortunate aunt of hers, Miss Eversfield, who looks as if she found her hands a great deal too full with such a charge. She was in Howel and James's, where I went with a little quiet niece of mine, who was rather surprised and scandalised by the manner in which Miss Caroline was going on—Miss Eversfield, looking as if she could not help herself. I really pitied the poor woman, she seemed so worried and annoyed."

"I didn't know Sir Hector had a sister."

"Oh yes! she is a comfortable, starched looking spinster, living in a snug little house in South Street; she told me that Car was staying with her, in order to procure her *trousseau*, and that the wedding was to take place without any delay, she was happy to say," she added with a groan.

Lord Glendinnon started up suddenly, and throwing the newspaper on one side, walked hurriedly out of the club, and getting at once into his cab, which was wait-

ing, returned home, and having summoned Courtier and given him some directions, again departed.

Later in the day, Car, who was in a most restless state, wishing herself dead and buried rather than to be shut up all alone in that little room, in that dull street (for poor Aunt Jane was still ill in bed), *faute de mieux*, seated herself at the open window, the sun shining bright and warm, even at that advanced season.

There were few passers-by, the parks being at that empty season not much frequented; but still a few stray carriages might be seen, and upon Car's principle of "aught being better than naught," she did watch a few young men on horseback, who for the last few days had habitually turned down that street on their way to the park, for this was not the first time a radiant face had been seen issuing from between the closely-drawn muslin curtains; Car, whenever Aunt Jane's back was turned, being

wont, as her only chance of obtaining some variety, to rush to the window and gaze out upon the passers-by. She gloried in being stared at; it was a species of incense, so charming that it was always welcome, from whatever source it came.

To-day she felt particularly blue-devilish. Her aunt was very ill, and the formal old doctor — who had attended Miss Eversfield for years, and was as much a friend as a medical adviser, being well aware that this attack of his patient had been brought on by anxiety and worry, — had informed the young lady, in grave admonitory terms, that if Miss Eversfield was not kept very quiet, both in mind and body, he feared that her present attack would turn to jaundice, a most trying and lingering disorder.

“A broad hint to me, of course,” Car thought, “to walk about this small cage like a mouse, never to speak above a whisper, and to waste all my precious time

in keeping prisoner to the house—but I won't stand that! I am to be married the end of the month, and my things are not half ready; and Mr. G—— says I must have several more sittings. I shall certainly go to him, as I have done since Aunt Jane took to her bed, quite early; for Norman will be mad if the picture is not nearly finished when he arrives. Heigho! I wish he was here! After all, I begin to think I am quite in love with 'my spouse elect.' ”

In the absorption of these reflections, Car had, without thought, advanced through the open window upon the little balcony, —upon which flourished, in all the dignity of soot and dust, a few plants, and boxes of mignonette, —forming as conspicuous an appearance as when we first introduced her to our readers on a similar platform.

But now she stood there almost unconsciously—her thoughts far away, and they really were then with her absent lover.

She was thinking, "How pleasant it will be when I am married, and out of all this botheration! What a life I have always had of it — people continually at me from morning till night! And Norman says that if I only love him, he will let me do just what I like; and, upon my word, I don't see why I should not love the handsome boy — I verily believe I *do* love him. People don't always, indeed, scarcely ever, marry exactly the man who is their *beau ideal*; however, what does it signify? perhaps —— "

She stopped short in her meditation, and almost a scream issued from her lips. The sound of horses' feet had caused her to turn her head, and her eyes fell upon the stately form of Lord Glendinnon, who, reining in his horse for a moment, bowed his head with reverent homage, and then passed on, followed by his groom.

Car stood transfixed; her eyes mechanically following the retreating figure, till

the horse and its rider turned the corner into Park Lane. And then, with a revulsion of feeling which seemed to change the whole current of her blood,—for her cheeks and lips, before so brilliant in colouring, became deadly white,—tottering to the sofa, she threw herself upon it, ready to faint.

But in a moment or two she had started up into a sitting posture, and thus she remained for some time, her hands clasped over her knees.

“Oh! that man, that man!” she murmured. “Why has he started up again to disturb me? How is it—oh! what is it—that makes me feel thus?” and she pressed her hand upon her heart, which was beating fast and wild. “I thought he was far, far away; and I was so happy, so contented, looking forward to my marriage with Norman without the slightest repugnance—but now—now—even that one look has unsettled all my feelings! What is it, I wonder? The man must be a

demon, a spirit of mischief, for one glance from those eyes is sufficient to bewitch me."

And Car covered her face with her hand, and continued to muse.

"But what does it signify? why should I be so foolish? I wish Norman would come," she exclaimed, starting up and pacing the room hurriedly, "and then it would be all right; and till he comes, I must never leave this house! Good heavens! if I were to meet him, and he were to speak to me, what should I do? And my vow to Norman—that dreadful vow—and his terrible countenance whilst he made me repeat the frightful words!"

Fate certainly had destined matters in that dark, inscrutable manner, which we weak mortals can never fathom—so antagonistic do they seem to our ideas, of what they should be.

Everything seemed to conspire against the peace of this unhappy girl, so unsound in principle, so wholly without heart, yet

with passions strong both in selfishness and power.

On going to bed that night, weary and unsettled, Mam'selle Louise had much to relate—how she had met her brother, man-cook to some nobleman, who had come up on business for a few days, and whilst walking with him, whom should they meet but Lord Glendinnon's valet, Monsieur Courtier, well known to her brother. "Oh, such a pleasant man! We became quite *les amis intimes*," the Frenchwoman continued. "He told me they had nearly reached Florence when Milor was telegraphed back—his Lady, it seems, was on the point of death, but she has recovered, *pour le moment* only, Monsieur Courtier says, for she must die very soon. Oh! Mademoiselle, he let me into many secrets. That poor Lord—how unhappy he seems to have been after you left Westover Castle! Monsieur Courtier says he has never been like himself since; never did he see Milor so *eperdument*

amoureux ; and when he heard of your intended marriage,—Monsieur Courtier happened to be in the room when the morning papers were brought in,—he never can forget his Lordship's face of anguish, and the manner in which he crushed the paper together, and threw it on one side, rushing out of the room at the same time, and shutting himself up for hours in his private room, from which he issued, with a countenance *terrible*, only to give orders for a journey to Italy."

All this, and many more additions made to this tissue of falsehood, was whispered insidiously into Car's ready ear.

Louise had evidently been taken most readily into the plot, and was certainly a most skilful accomplice. Lord Glendinnon was, without mistake, a liberal paymaster to those who pandered to his pleasures.

Car went to bed that night with very different feelings to those which had filled her trifling, versatile mind for the last few weeks.

CHAPTER XV.

CAR awoke the next morning unusually early, and, wonderful to say, with an unpleasant weight upon her mind.

"I really must not play the fool," she cogitated; "in three days more Norman will be here, and I shall be safe, so I am determined to be prudent. I'll make a vow not to stir out of the house, and shall write to Mr. G—— and tell him I cannot fulfil my engagement for to-day. Oh! that horrid oath! I suppose I cannot break it without going to Old Scratch; and, upon my word it would be a bore to lose my handsome young intended, and, just for the sake of a little fun, to get into a scrape out of which I never can get out. Fun, did I

say,—Heigho! it is more than mere fun. Oh! that adorable man! But no, I'll try to be a good girl for once in my life, and resist temptation. Yes, *sore temptation*."

And with these resolves, Car got out of bed, and commenced her toilet.

"You need not get out that dress," she said, as Louise brought forth and laid on the bed the simple but beautifully fitting white silk dress in which her picture was taken.

"I am not going to Mr. G—— this morning; you must take a note to him from me."

Louise looked aghast, but was silent; the wily woman understood too well the nature of her young lady to begin by exposition. She had plenty of time before her, whilst plaiting and arranging Car's beautiful hair. Verily, the serpent who beguiled our first parent in Paradise was not more poisonous in its deadly counsel than this unprincipled woman in the

venomous, blasting suggestions she whispered in her ear. Well she understood how to attack the many weak and frail points of this unfortunate girl's character—her vanity, her easily excited passions; and the vile tempter watched her victim's face as in low, insidious tones, but in words we need not blot our pages by repeating, she spoke that which brought the crimson glow to the countenance before unusually pale, and, for her, a trifle more than usually pensive.

We will pass over this scene of shame. Poor Car! would that it could have been otherwise; but we grieve to say, the white silk dress was allowed to be put on, and with a large cloak entirely concealing it, she soon found herself in Mr. G——'s studio.

And there she stood, this *beautiful fiend*, represented as standing in the midst of a lovely parterre, her white dress hanging in rich folds about her exquisitely formed person; her hands full of damask roses; no

ornament in her hair, but its own beautiful plaits covering her small head with their luxuriant folds. Her faultless figure had been most artistically delineated; we might have thought, while gazing on its Circe-like charms, that, had poor Lady Julia been there, it would have been different, and that the beautiful bust and shoulders would not have been quite so dazzlingly revealed. But what could Mr. G—— do?

Thus the beautiful girl stood before him, and what artist could resist the temptation of copying so perfect a model?

Yes, there she stood, motionless as a statue, unlike her usual mood, Mr. G——. thought; for her restless eyes seemed fixed, as if in abstracted meditation.

Presently there came a knock at the door, to which, as usual, Mr. G—— rose to attend.

He found standing without a tall, commanding-looking man; with whose identity he was far from unacquainted.

"I am engaged with a Lady, my Lord," Mr. G—— said, "but if you will step into the adjoining room ——"

The visitor, however, with a courteous bow and smiling wave of the hand, cut his further excuses short by stepping, *sans cérémonie*, into the studio, and, in an instant, standing in his stately height before Car, who with blanched lips gasped forth, —

"Lord Glendinnon!"

Lord Glendinnon advanced and took her hand, murmuring, as he bent over it, a few low words which seemed to produce the effect of soothing the apparent dismay which his first appearance had occasioned; and Mr. G——, as he resumed his painting, had no reason to quarrel with the interruption. Whilst Lord Glendinnon sat opposite to her, conversing, the paleness, and almost stupid abstraction, of countenance he had remarked that morning in his subject, were replaced by a strange excite-

ment, which, feverish as might be its nature, was none the less artistically becoming.

When the sitting was over—which the artist was unconsciously beguiled into prolonging by the agreeable company which had so enlivened the task—Car found, on returning from the room into which she had retired to resume her walking attire, and where Louise was in attendance, that the Earl was still waiting. She really felt rather faint and sick at heart; but what could she do?

She did, indeed, attempt some faint deprecating petitions; which seemed, however, to have proved wholly without effect. Lord Glendinning did not leave her.

Nay, the route back to South Street seemed a far longer one than that by which she had come; and poor, helpless Aunt Jane was obliged to be content with the excuse of shopping, pleaded as a reason for the prolonged absence.

It was, however, still two or three days before Miss Eversfield would be able to resume her duties, and two more sittings was she obliged to allow her niece to attend, without her supervision. Car represented it as a matter of necessity, if the picture was ever to be finished. Two sittings professedly, for alas! but one had been in reality appointed; for the other was to be substituted, not a walk—that would be too public—but a drive in the brougham. This was earnestly pleaded as the last indulgence he should ever again ask, or which, indeed, circumstances would allow. And Car, in consenting, did so more in weak folly, and sheer idleness, than in actual vice, and fully intended that this certainly should be her last performance in the fast line.

The unstable girl was wholly unable to resist temptation, and particularly Lord Glendinnon's influence, which acted like a dire sirocco upon her feelings. It was the

last thing, after all, she wished to do,—to give up Norman Lawless. He was young and rich, and though — and though—alas! alas! she cared for him in oh! how very different a manner than for that “splendid, glorious man,” as she called him, she was not going to be such a fool as to let him slip through her fingers, and bring confusion worse confounded upon her head.

And oh! she would sometimes muse, whilst her whole being shook with affright at the idea, “That vow—that dreadful vow—would that these few days were past, and that Norman was here, that I were married to him, and all was safe—for till that is well over, I cannot answer for myself. But what harm in yielding this once more to the great enjoyment of a *tête-à-tête* with that charming man? In short, I cannot, dare not resist it. I shall never be the worse for it, nor Norman the wiser; but the vow—that horrid vow!—well, I must be the most virtuous and the stupidest of

women henceforth and for evermore, to make up for the sin of breaking it."

And was Norman none the wiser?

What though in both these walks from the artist's the most quiet and unobtrusive routes had been chosen,—though at this early morning hour, and empty season of the year, Car fancied she had been as unobserved as if London had been really the desert it comparatively speaking represented, or as if a decree had gone forth that all doors and windows, and eyes and ears, should be hermetically sealed? Lookers on at any time and season are to be found, and Peeping Toms, even in these days, are not exterminated.

No matter who it was, friend or foe, who first spread abroad the report, and mentioned it to Norman's faithful friend, Captain Asheton: all we know, is that the Electric Telegraph, that

"messenger of woe to thousands,"

shot from London, and was darting across

the Irish Channel, its missive addressed to the Honourable Norman Lawless, worded as follows,—

“ Lord Glendinnon is in London. Come immediately.”

And Norman, on the wings of hate and torturing misgiving, flew to follow the ominous counsel, and travelling all night, arrived in Town the very morning that the drive was appointed.

At once he rushed to Captain Asheton's lodgings, knocking up the still slumbering household, and making his way to the bedside of his friend, exclaimed,—

“ Tell me the truth at once; has Car Eversfield been seen in company with Lord Glendinnon? You need not hesitate to state the facts,” he resumed with astonishing calmness, seeing that the bewildered man, scarcely knew how to answer this terrible question.

The truth, indeed, was obliged to be spoken. And Asheton, who was acquainted

with all the previous circumstances relating to this unpromising engagement of his unfortunate friend, and who had endeavoured in vain to dissuade him from again allowing himself to be ensnared by the perfidious beauty, felt he had no course left to pursue but to state the facts of the case, which he had heard from a brother officer who lived opposite to the artist, Mr. G——, and who had been an eye-witness of the early meetings of Lord Glendinnon and the faithless Car.

“ My dear Norman, knowing, as I did, the state of the case, and your previous suspicions of Miss Eversfield’s treachery towards you, I felt that it was my imperative duty to tell you what was going forward, and only hope you will not act rashly. She is not worth it.”

The answer was a loud, unnatural laugh.

“ You need not be alarmed, old boy,” he added “ I shall have my revenge, but not in the manner you may imagine. I have

formed all my plans ; you need not fear for me, I shall soon be safe from any danger from her, or I am much mistaken." And so saying he precipitately left the room, leaving Captain Asheton sorely perplexed.

He had acted for the best, but, gracious heavens ! perhaps he had done wrong, for Norman's wild looks, his unnatural calmness, and the sinister expression of his countenance struck terror to his heart.

CHAPTER XVI.

At a later hour, that same morning, a short, loud knock was heard at the door of Miss Eversfield's house, which when the servant opened, he was startled by the apparition of Captain Lawless.

Yes! an apparition he might well have thought it, so changed was the whole appearance of this handsome, triumphant, gay young man who, a short fortnight before, had been a personification of one who had indeed the ball at his feet. Ghastly he looked; his eyes bloodshot, his hair dishevelled, and his dress soiled and neglected.

"Is Miss Eversfield at home?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, but not down stairs yet."

"I mean Miss Caroline."

"Oh, Miss Caroline has been out some time;" she has gone, I believe, to Mr. G——'s. She generally goes early."

No further word was spoken; Lawless had turned, and was striding impetuously down the street. Again he asked, of the servant who opened the door at Mr. G——'s,

"Is Miss Caroline Eversfield here?"

"No, sir; she was not expected: Mr. G—— left London yesterday, and does not return till late to-day."

"Oh, very well!" was the reply; "but I shall go up stairs and look at the picture; I know my way," he added to the man who was following him, and with a fierce gesture waving him off. Norman entered the studio alone, and there stood the picture, now almost completely finished, perhaps the very masterpiece of all Mr. G——'s artistic productions.

The subject was a beautiful one, and he had, indeed, throughout the whole course of the *seance*, painted *con amore*.

Car was very bewitching to the senses of every man who looked upon her, and it was rather an ordeal, even to the systematic professional man, to have such a subject so often before him; she, as was her wont in the presence of any man, endeavouring with all her might and main to captivate him by those glances she understood so well how to employ. We may, then, imagine what a striking picture it was.

Yes, there stood his "beautiful fiend" in all the zenith of youthful freshness; her face such a mockery of blushing, guileless innocence; her expression so tender, so confiding, rendering her brilliant eyes unusually gentle in their alluring softness. Yes, there she stood, the very counterfeit emblem of the bride a man might covet as a priceless gem, a creature at whose shrine every knee might bow with reverence, as well as love. Mr. G—— had certainly, in the two last sittings, caught some new expression which was unusual to the general

insouciant aspect of Car Eversfield's countenance, some deeper feelings which must, for the moment, have been stirring at her heart. And Norman gazed at the picture of this woman he so madly adored long and silently, and whilst so doing the workings of his mind might have been read in his countenance. Fearful it was to denote the demoniacal passions which distorted it. But he moved not, spoke not; with his arms folded he stood, with his bloodshot eyes glaring at the picture, till suddenly he turned round and looked about the room as if seeking something. Mr. G——'s palette was on a table close by, and his brushes just as he had left them. A terrible laugh might have been then heard, and Norman Lawless strode towards the table, and covering a large brush with a thick layer of dark paint, approached the picture, and in another moment no vestige remained of the lovely face; it was completely obliterated by a daub of dark colour, and then the in-

furiated young man proceeded to mutilate the appearance of the bust—the neck and arms of this representative of all that was attractive in a woman.

And when this deed was done, and no trace of the false fair one remained, another loud peal of laughter echoed through the room; and Norman, deliberately throwing himself into a chair, sat contemplating his work of destruction with insane triumph. “But,” he suddenly exclaimed, “the man must be paid for his trouble, I am not going to cheat him, or have an action brought against me, so here it goes,” and he drew from his pocket a check-book, and having ascertained that there were pens and ink on a table, he, with the utmost deliberation, wrote a check for the large amount he had engaged to pay for the picture, enclosed it in an envelope, directing it to Mr. G——.

There was certainly “method in his madness;” and having again cast a fearful look at the portrait, with another

horrid laugh he left the room, and meeting the servant, who was hovering about, rather mystified by the unusual demeanour of the young Captain, gave him the letter, which he desired might be delivered to Mr. G——. Then, rushing into the streets, he got into the first cab he met, and soon after was on the railroad — his destination Scotland.

CHAPTER XVII.

LINDA had become most weary of her existence at Lough Rea, or, rather, of the uncongenial spirits with whom she was associated. Month after month elapsed, and still Lord and Lady Sunderland were in close attendance upon their daughter, who was, indeed, sick unto death.

All the asperities in the temper of the young girl seemed to be drawn forth by the changed aspect of her life. She who had been for so long accustomed to the mild rule of Lady Sunderland, and the refinement which pervaded every arrangement, every word and action, of the members of that family, now to find herself in such totally different companionship! And

Norman's approaching marriage— How the idea of these inauspicious nuptials had altered all her feelings and interests in all around !

Lady Curraghmore began by endeavouring to exercise the same tyranny over her husband's niece which she had so successfully wielded over her own daughters ; but she speedily found what a very different spirit she had to cope with. Linda's warm Italian blood, mingled with that of her father's impetuous temperament, soon showed itself in the indignant burst of disgust with which she received the insulting reproofs from her ladyship, whose hard, light eyes were even seen to look with startled astonishment at any one who dared to dispute her will, and to return glances equally proud and defiant as her own.

Linda's nature had not yet been softened and wholly changed by the transforming power of experience in the troubles of the

world. At this time her will was fierce and indomitable, her countenance even indicative of the hard struggle that was going forward in her heart—for the girl was very unhappy. She could not but dislike all those with whom she lived, save her uncle, and of him she saw very little, for Lord Curraghmore came as seldom as possible in contact with his most uncongenial family; but whenever she did see him, and whilst sitting by his side at dinner, he had always a kind word to say, which for the moment cheered her.

Linda chafed in spirit at what she considered the Sunderlands' desertion of her; of her, who for so many years had been as their daughter—forgetting how impossible it was for them to think of aught else at that moment, when Lady Elizabeth, always exacting, required all their thought and care. Now she began to appreciate and long ardently for what she had hitherto looked upon with cold indifference,—the

presence of the gentle lady whom she had never before loved or estimated sufficiently. But the sharpest, bitterest, of all her heart sorrows were her thoughts connected with Norman,—that cousin whom she loved so fondly, and who, she knew, was about to take a step which seemed only likely to lead to misery. And then to hear the words of contumely, the taunts, the awful predictions with which his mother, and of course his sister, loaded his name whenever it was mentioned, goaded her to anger which could not be controlled; and the fragile-looking girl, grown bold by her love for this long-cherished idol, would bandy words even with this fierce, vindictive woman, and bring upon herself scenes of violence and recrimination which only a spirit morbidly excited, as hers was at that time, could have endured.

It was on a night, after some such scene of violence, that Linda sat in her room. She was still dressed, though it was very

late; but her mind had been too much disturbed to do aught but either pace up and down the room, or sit with her hands clasped and teeth clenched,—her dilated eyes fixed on vacancy, her heart swelling alternately with sorrow and deep anger, as she thought of the words that had been uttered, the dreadful things that had been said, of Norman.

“Yes, Norman!” she repeated, over and over again, “Norman, whom, let him do what he may, I must always love so dearly. And his own mother to say such dreadful words—even to wish that he may repent this unfortunate marriage by the never-ending misery it will entail upon him! To wish him to be unhappy, that bright creature! And yet it *is* wrong of him, wicked and mad, knowing, as he does, what she is—‘a beautiful fiend’ even *he* called her.”

And a dark look passed over her countenance.

“Oh! what would I not have done to

have saved him from this fatal step?—but what could I do?” and she wrung her hands despairingly.

And Linda continued to sit absorbed in some such disquieting meditations, her eyes now fixed upon the window, from which the curtain was withdrawn; the moon, which was lighting the apartment with its radiant silvery beams, shining full upon her.

Presently—but was it only a distracted vision of her brain?—no, surely, surely there was a dark shadow upon the casement window! She started from her seat in affright. What could it be? There was not even a balcony, but merely a narrow buttress or projection, thickly overgrown with the ivy and creepers which covered the walls, scarcely, apparently, wide enough for a man to stand upon.

The apartment Linda inhabited was in a remote wing of this old rambling house; her maid slept in a small room adjoining

it, but she had been long in bed and asleep. The terrified girl, transfixed with horror, her distended eyes riveted upon the window, distinctly discerned a man's head. A scream would have issued from her lips had she possessed the power to utter it. Could it be—oh! impossible—was it Norman's face she saw?—his ghost, his spirit rather—that livid countenance which stared in upon her but for a moment?—for the next, one of the small old-fashioned panes of the window was smashed, and a letter fell through the aperture, and then the figure disappeared.

Had Linda screamed, her maid must have awakened; but the sight seemed to have paralysed her every faculty. Was it a dream or trance? She thought, as there she still stood motionless, powerless to move,—“That was Norman's face; I know it was; I never could mistake it; dreadful as he looked—and that letter, oh! that indeed is real,” she ruminated, as the moon rays glittered on the white folded paper.

“What can all this mean?” she exclaimed, as, shaking in every limb, she stepped forward to pick up the letter.

“Yes, it is his own handwriting,” she continued, as she looked at the address. “To Linda,” it was directed, and then she sank into a chair, and hastily tearing the paper open she read these words—

“Linda, how often you have professed affection for me—have declared that you would do anything, nay, even forfeit your life, to serve me. The moment has arrived when you can prove whether these protestations were true, or only spoken on the impulse of the moment—mere froth or reality. You have the power of saving me from the fate you have often deplored; but it will be at the greatest sacrifice of yourself, of your happiness—ay, no greater sacrifice a woman can make—therefore ponder, ere you do what I demand of you. I ask you now to come at once and fly with me. Bring with you a few necessities;

for if you are at the foot of the Glengarry hills in the course of an hour, I warn you, you will not again return to Lough Rea Castle. I shall consider your presence there in the light of an acquiescence in my wishes, whatever they may be, and all is prepared for our immediate flight. If your heart fails you, and you *dare* not come, another fate awaits *me*; that, too, is all prepared, and a moment will accomplish it. For your own sake, Linda, I tell you plainly, you had better *not come*; for, poor girl, why should you link your fate with that of a cold-blooded villain, who is planning to immolate you—and for what end, and for whom? Yes, but to make you an instrument to accomplish his revenge upon a worthless woman!

“Remember, in less than an-hour I must see you, or—the alternative will be an easy task; one slight touch, and the deed is done.”

* * * * *

Linda sat motionless, all her senses suspended, stunned, and thus it continued for a few moments; then, suddenly, she started up, and throwing her arms wildly over her head, she exclaimed—

“I’ll go, I’ll go; whatever it may be—whatever it may cost me, I’ll go!” And then, with her wild eyes gleaming, her knees trembling with agitation, she commenced hurriedly stuffing into a carpet-bag a miscellaneous number of articles.

“I had better take this,” she said, as her small trinket-box caught her eye, “who knows, it may be of use;” and then tying on her bonnet and cloak, she at once made her way down stairs, and easily found egress to the open air; bolts and bars, in these Highland homes, not being, as with us, of the same impervious nature.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AND Linda went forth to meet her doom. Although so late in the year, the night was bright and still; every surrounding object rendered conspicuously clear and beautiful by the softening light of the full moon, floating with such majestic grandeur over the romantic scenery.

A stupendous hill skirted the domain of Lough Rea, a rustic seat had been formed in the cleft of the rocky base, and it was there Linda found Norman Lawless.

"You are come then, Linda," he cried, as he sprang forward to meet her, seizing her hand and pressing it convulsively; "I thank you, little cousin."

But in what a tone, with what a look,

were these words uttered ; what bloodshot eyes—what a haggard countenance ! Linda felt a cold chill of affright run through all her veins as she looked upon her cousin.

“Norman,” she said, falteringly, “what—what has happened ?”

A bitter laugh was the answer.

“Norman,” she continued, “you terrify me ; tell me what has distressed you ?”

“Distressed me ? that’s your name for it—distressed me forsooth ?” and again that horrid laugh rang through the clear air.

“But, Linda,” he continued again, clutching both her hands, and drawing her towards him, “you can save me from all this—make me free.”

“I—Norman ?”

“Yes, you Linda ;” he answered, “but *will* you ? and indeed, can I ask you, poor child, to sacrifice yourself for a selfish, maddened wretch like me ?”

“Oh ! Norman, you know I would do

anything in my power to make you happy — but what can I do?"

"Happy!" he cried impatiently; "there is no question about happiness — that is over with me. But, Linda, I want to be henceforth free — secure from *her*."

"What, Norman! can you mean that beautiful creature you are so soon to marry?"

"Yes; or, as I now with all my heart can call her, that 'beautiful fiend,' whom, with your assistance, I will *never* marry."

"My assistance?—what can you mean?" faltered the trembling girl, who became every minute more terrified by Norman's unnatural manner. "Gladly would I do my best to extricate you from her influence, that she might never more have the power to hurt or to vex you; never cross your path again — but what can I do? for you will love her, will go back to her," she added, now passionately, "whatever she may be or do."

"Love her!" Norman inwardly murmured; "love her!—unfortunate wretch that I am—so it will ever be! But go back to her!—no, Linda, I shall never go back to her," he added aloud; "that is to say, if you will, as you said before, assist me to prevent it."

"Norman, Norman," she pleaded, "say at once what you mean—only tell me at once."

"Mean, Linda? what else can I mean? There is only one thing to be done—*you must marry me!*"

Norman had sunk upon the rocky seat, she was standing by his side, and he leant his head upon his hands as he spoke, with a reckless desperation. He did not care even to mark the effect which this declaration would have upon his companion.

For several minutes she did not speak; and then he heard her say in a broken, almost wailing voice, "Oh, Norman! and you know you do not love me!"

"That is not the question, Linda," he fiercely responded. "I did not come here to make a declaration of love; I ask you only—*will you marry me?*"

"No, no!" she cried, "not if you do not love me."

"Ah!" he exclaimed, with quiet scorn. "Well, it does not much signify; but I thought *you* loved *me*, and would prefer the alternative."

"And so I do love you; *I do*, Norman—better than my life; and—and," and she knelt weeping by his side, "I would die to serve you."

"But you will not marry me!" he repeated, and turned away his head in cold silence.

And there the poor girl knelt, and wept despairingly, not knowing what to do. Her love for Lawless—so strong within her at that moment, that it had reconciled her to be trampled under his feet—struggling with

the pride and self-respect inherent in her nature.

For a whole ten minutes, perhaps, she knelt thus silently—Norman neither moving his position, nor appearing to note her misery.

“He thinks I do not love him sufficiently; that I think only of myself; that I will make no sacrifice to save him from the treacherous beauty who will break his heart! And perhaps—perhaps in time—in time he might love me; he loves me now as a sister—he has often told me so; and such love as mine must win me some return—must make him forget her.”

Such were her closing reflections; and finally her devoted heart was able to brave anything better than his anger, his cold disappointment. She rose and murmured in his ear,—

“Norman, I will be your wife, if you wish it.”

“On any terms?” was the hollow-toned answer.

And Linda again faltered an affirmative.

She little knew the extent of what she was assenting to, or she might still have shrank from such self-immolation.

Then Norman slowly lifted up his head, and looked at her more eagerly, whilst he said, strangely and coldly still,—

“Thank you, Linda; I thought you would not refuse me. It will at least do you little harm, poor child; and to me it will be salvation.”

He spoke this, grasping tightly her hand; her head sunk upon his shoulder.

But only for a moment was this permitted — Norman seemed to shudder at this movement of affection in his promised wife; again he repeated the words,—

“I thank you, Linda; but you know not the extent of what you are promising. Listen attentively to what I am about to say; let me speak whilst I have the power to do so coherently, for,”—and he pressed his hand upon his forehead,—“I feel all

wrong here. Linda, I have asked you to marry me; I shall take care that the ceremony is legally performed, but we part at the altar *never to meet again!* And now say, will you marry me? Remember, I have another alternative," and, plunging his hand into his bosom, he drew forth a small pistol. "This is my alternative, Linda. You promise to marry me, consenting to our parting at the church-door for ever, or in another moment this miserable life will be ended. I care not which it is, as far as I am concerned — although, indeed, revenge is sweet, and that would be best accomplished by my marrying you."

Deliberately the maniac, for such he really was at that moment, cocked his pistol.

"Now, Linda, decide! Promise to marry me under these conditions, or prepare to see your dearly-beloved cousin, to serve whom you have professed yourself so often willing gladly even to die stretched a ghastly

corpse at your feet — say the word at once, for I can wait no longer,” and he held the pistol to his forehead.

A scream issued from the lips of the astonished girl.

“Norman, oh, Norman, for mercy’s sake stop, I will marry you,” she cried — “under any condition — only give me that pistol.”

Norman gave it to her, and in an instant it was flung over the precipice near which they sat.

“Then come away,” he cried. No more thanks were given; he seized her hand, and prepared to depart. Happening to stumble against the carpet bag she had, by his orders, brought with her, he deliberately stooped down and shouldered it; then, with inconsiderate speed, the girl was dragged along over the stony path until they had reached the high road, where a carriage awaited them.

We must now recall our readers’ attention

to the first chapters of this story, which describe Linda's inauspicious wedding, and her subsequent flight from London to Paris.

CHAPTER XIX.

AND what was Car Eversfield about all this time?

She had awakened that morning with the uncomfortable weight of a disapproving conscience at her heart.

"This drive with Lord Glendinnon," she mused, "it will be really too bad, too improper even for me to venture upon. What a fool I was to promise; but there is something about that man I *dare* not resist," and she was deep in reflection for some moments. "No it will never, never do; I must get out of it somehow or another," she resolutely murmured, and thus she remained cogitating till Louise came to call her, and then she rose at once, and com-

menced her toilette, surprising the French woman by her grave abstracted looks.

Car had not told her Abigail of the intended plan for the morning. She was to have gone out as usual about eleven o'clock, saying that it was for the purpose of having her last sitting for her picture. The brougham, containing his lordship, was to be stationed at a spot indicated in Oxford Street—the Earl considering that locality a far more secure place for concealment than any quiet back-street in which a carriage of any description is a thing to stare at. But for the first time in her life, Car determined to do what was right—at least in this instance. “No, she would not go.”

So she sat down to the writing table and scrawled the following lines:—

“DEAR LORD GLENDINNON,

“I am really afraid to drive with you to-day, so forgive my not coming.

“Yours most truly,

“CAR.”

She however put on her walking things, and sallied forth, accompanied by Louise, and when they had proceeded as far as Grosvenor Square, she said —

“ Louise, get into this cab ” (she hailed one that was passing at the moment), “ and drive to Oxford Street ; close to a shop just opposite the Pantheon you will find a private brougham waiting ; in it you will see Lord Glendinnon. Let the cabman give him the note, and come away at once, lest he should stop you and ask any questions. You will find me walking about here on the south side of the square, waiting for you. “ How long will it take you to drive this person quickly to the Pantheon and back ? ” Car asked of the cabman, at the same time looking at her watch.

The man answered, “ Not more than a minute or two after the quarter of an hour.”

“ Very well,” she continued, “ Louise, I shall expect you will not be a moment longer, or I shall know you loitered on the road.”

Louise shrugged her shoulders, and with some muttered observations in French, entered the cab and was whirled away, looking very cross.

And Car, with her mind not at all at ease, paced up and down the square till the cab returned, bringing back Mademoiselle Louise, who had not at all recovered her equanimity.

"Well?" inquired Car eagerly.

"Well," answered the woman sulkily, and continued in French: "I have nothing to say; the cabman, as you ordered, gave Milord the note, and *me voila*."

Mademoiselle Louise was much affronted that she had not been let into the mystery of the cabal, and was sullenly silent until they reached South Street.

The door of the house was opened by the man-servant, who, in a tone of voice sounding somewhat ominous, informed Miss Caroline that Captain Lawless had called half an hour before.

"Captain Lawless!" Car exclaimed, and turned pale. Her inward ejaculation was, "Thank God!" and it was with a feeling of relief and comfort at her heart that she eagerly asked,

"And when did he say he would return?"

"Captain Lawless did not say anything about returning, Miss," was the solemnly spoken reply; and somehow or other Car felt frightened.

Trouble brings with it, we think, an oppressive atmosphere, casting its gloomy shadow before. And certainly there was an expression even on fat Thomas's face, a tone in his voice, which told that something was amiss; and Car rushed up-stairs with a beating heart into the drawing-room, in which Miss Eversfield was now seated.

"Car," she immediately exclaimed, "where have you been all this time? And do you know that Thomas tells me, Captain Lawless called half an hour ago, looking quite

wild, his eyes, bloodshot, starting out of his head? He says he scarcely would have known him, he looked so changed; and when he said that you were at Mr. G.'s he started off, Thomas said, as if he were mad, — such a description he gave of him!”

Car sat down on the nearest chair, really feeling quite faint.

“What can be the matter?” Miss Eversfield continued; “he must have heard some bad news.”

“He must indeed,” thought Car, and her heart sank low. “Gracious heavens! if he *has heard*—and my vow—my vow!”

She could have shrieked aloud, for the unfortunate girl saw clearly before her the whole truth, and that she had brought upon herself the doom she so justly merited.

“What ails you, Caroline?” Miss Eversfield impatiently inquired: “do you know any reason why Captain Lawless should have looked thus this morning? I trust—” and now beginning to be alarmed, she

added, "Car, you surely have not been doing anything imprudent—wrong—whilst I have been laid up! Speak quickly, girl; why do you sit there, looking so pale and scared? You make me feel quite nervous."

"I am tired, Aunt Jane, and do not feel quite well. I know nothing of Norman's freaks; he is prone to vagaries—no doubt he has just come off his long journey; perhaps had a rough passage, and was seasick," she continued, trying to speak lightly. "Well, I'll go and take off my bonnet. I dare say he will soon cast up again."

And Car went to her room, and locking the door, that Louise might not enter, threw herself on her bed in an agony of terror.

"What am I to do, if he has heard anything? Oh! what a mad fool I have been! And, merciful heavens! now I think of it, the Denisons live opposite to Mr. G——, and who knows but that the son in the Guards may not have seen me go

out of the house with Lord Glendinnon, and he would be sure to tell Captain Asheton, and he—he hates me; he was once in love with me himself, and I worried his life nearly out. I know he always implored Norman to give me up; yes, I see it all—all.”

And Car was really in a pitiable state. She feigned a headache for that day, and remained in her room: but the next she was obliged to come forth, and endeavour to sit patiently under the martyrdom of listening to every knock and ring at the hall-door with a beating heart: expecting tidings of Norman, and having to endure her aunt's wonderment, and interminable surmise and questioning.

The accounts from Everslee, also, were most depressing. Lady Julia was becoming daily weaker, and it was quite evident that all hope of her recovery was at an end.

* * * * *

Five dreadful days had passed since

Norman had appeared at the door of the South Street mansion. Miss Eversfield began to be seriously alarmed; and saw plainly that Car was also in a most perturbed state of mind. The aunt scarcely knew what course to pursue at this juncture. Sir Hector was already plunged in affliction, watching by the sick-bed of his declining wife; it would be cruel to add one pang to his heart, as long as it could possibly be avoided.

* * * * *

"Car," Miss Eversfield said, in a stern voice, on the morning of the sixth day from Norman Lawless's appearance, when they were at breakfast, both wearing on their countenances unmistakeable signs of great anxiety and annoyance. "Car," she repeated in the sternest manner, "I can no longer endure this state of things. I desire you will tell me at once what all this is about. I am quite convinced you know more than you choose to allow. Yes, you unprin-

cipled girl, you have, I feel convinced, committed yourself in some manner, and forfeited for ever the regard of that young man, who was so sincerely attached to you."

"Oh, Aunt Jane, how cruelly you speak!" and Car had begun her usual loud whimpering, when Thomas entered with the 'Times' in his hand; and with a look upon his face, which, if it had been observed, might have conveyed the impression that he had seen some astounding intelligence whilst opening and drying the paper, he laid it, as usual, before Miss Eversfield.

This lady's ruling passion was the supplement to the 'Times,' it was the only literature which was essential to her comfort and happiness; so even in the midst of this important debate with the delinquent Car, who was seated opposite to her, she could not resist running her eyes over the Births, Deaths, and Marriages.

Her niece, who had her handkerchief to her eyes, did not heed what was going forward; did not see that first Miss Evers-

field started violently as she glanced over the paragraph, and then knitting her brows fumbled in her pocket for her glasses ; her face all the time very pale, and her lips tightly compressed.

With trembling hands, she adjusted the spectacles, and read again.

"Car," she exclaimed in a tone, greatly resembling a scream, "what can this mean?" and she read aloud—

"On the 15th instant. The Honourable Captain Norman Lawless, Grenadier Guards, to Rosalinda, daughter of the late Honourable and Reverend Valentine Lawless."

Car hastily rose, and snatching the paper from her aunt's hand, eagerly read over the words. Then letting it drop from her powerless grasp, and exclaiming—

"Yes, it is all over with me!" she fainted away.

Who would ever have imagined the reckless Car brought to such a feminine extremity?

CHAPTER XX.

POOR Miss Eversfield ! The post had been late this morning ; but scarcely had they removed Car into the drawing-room, and laid her upon the sofa, when the overwhelmed lady's excited nerves were again irritated by the sharp, sudden, and the too often terrifying sound of the postman's knock.

"What next am I to hear?" she exclaimed, as she received a letter in Sir Hector's handwriting. The contents were not indeed of a composing nature—it ran as follows :

"DEAR JANE, —

"That wretched girl has again brought trouble upon herself, and every one.

She has contrived to associate with that scoundrel Glendinnon; Norman Lawless heard of it, and has written to tell me that, as the only sure means of freeing himself effectually from her future influence, he has married another woman. He refers me to Car, to exonerate him in my eyes from what may appear a breach of his solemn contract.

"I am, as you may imagine, as nearly distracted as a man can be. If possible I shall start by to-morrow night's train, and arrive in the morning to have an hour's conversation with her, whom I can never more consider in the light of a daughter.

"Yours, affectionately,

"HECTOR EVERSFIELD."

* * * * *

"My father, my poor darling papa!" cried Car, sitting up in her bed that same day, little resembling the brilliant Circe, the laughing Bacchante, the beautiful flirt of

other days; but a pale tear-stained Magdalen; her hair streaming disarranged around her shoulders, her hands clasped over her head, her countenance disturbed with grief.

“No, I cannot see papa, and he so unhappy about mamma! I deserved all so richly: it is a judgment surely for my sin, my perjury: yes, that oath, that dreadful oath, which I made even on my knees, ending with, ‘So help me, God:’ no wonder He has forsaken me. But what am I to do now? for I can not, will not meet my father’s eye. Once I saw it fixed upon me in anger, and then it nearly killed me; and now all I have done is so far, far worse. And Norman, poor Norman, whom really after all I like so much. Yes, I feel sure I should have loved him, and have been so happy with that handsome boy; and now to what a life I have to look forward, death, anything would be better.”

Car was indeed in a miserable plight, and thus she still remained, at one moment

walking about the room, at the next flung despairingly on the bed.

Louise glided noiselessly into the room. She had been several times ordered out by Car, loaded with reproaches and abuse. For the last few days, she had not spoken to her, or allowed the woman to utter a word to her.

"Yes, you, you depraved wretch, that you are," she did not scruple now to say; "you lured me to this ruin, you persuaded me to meet Lord Glendinnon that morning when I had resolved to behave properly and keep out of his way. Yes, it was you who did it all; get out of my sight, you vile woman!"

But now exhausted and thoroughly wretched she had not strength to resist the hypocritical entreaties and crocodile tears of this wily creature, that she would allow her to weep with her, to console her, if possible, by her sympathy. Louise was an admirable actress, and a clever fiend.

At length she persuaded her young lady

to lie down — she was really faint and ill, and smoothed her hair, bathed her temples well with *eau-de-Cologne*, made her swallow a composing draught, and watched the countenance of her charge calming, softening by degrees, and then she spoke a word or two ; but an impatient shake of the head warned her it was too soon. Again she hazarded a remark, a frown might be still seen on Car's brow, but Louise knew well the ground on which she stood.

An hour elapsed, and Car and her Abigail might be then seen in deep confidential discourse, Car's face now flushed, her bedimmed eyes sparkling with excitement, a reckless expression being now substituted for the look of intense misery which had before so altered the character of her countenance.

Car's mind was working fearfully : wild desperate suggestions, and dark and terrible resolves, were now passing through her mind. The train had been all prepared, and now

what was left to her but that it should be fired?

"Yes, Louise," were the words she spoke at the end of the long conference, "I see plainly that there is no alternative; I *must* do it, dreadful as it is."

"I'll meet the raging of the storm,
But not an angry father."

* * * * *

That night, Miss Eversfield sleeping heavily in the next room, Car stole downstairs, and from the lower premises gained access to the street, and ere the day had fully dawned was on her way to Dover with Lord Glendinning; and so it seemed as if there was an end of everything for the wretched girl, and all those whom she concerned; yet as far as human eye could see, a Providence, if such it could be called, which often refused its aid to less flagrant offenders, came forth here in behalf of the guilty.

Late that same day a telegram was following Lord Glendinnon across the channel, announcing the death, quite suddenly at last, of his countess, and the very next morning in Paris the second nuptials of the Earl were solemnized, Sacrilegious adaptation of such a term to an occasion so disgraceful!

The papers announced one day, the 17th instant, the decease of the Countess of Glendinnon; on the next, the world were startled and scandalised by the following astounding paragraph: "Married in Paris, on the 18th instant, the Earl of Glendinnon to Caroline, eldest daughter of Major-Gen. Sir Hector Eversfield of Everslee, in the county of——."

CHAPTER XXI.

MISS EVERSFIELD was awakened the next morning by the ominous words, "Don't be frightened, ma'am, but neither Miss Caroline nor Mademoiselle Louise are in the house, and their beds have not been slept in."

Miss Eversfield started up in dire affright.

"My brother, Sir Hector, has he not arrived?"

"No." But a letter was put into her trembling hands.

It was to say that Sir Hector was prevented setting out immediately, but would be in London late that night.

"Temple, for mercy's sake, send for Mr. Johnson! He will advise me what to do

about Car, and give me something to take, for I believe all this is killing me,—I feel so ill!” and the poor lady sank back on her pillow, looking very like death indeed.

Mr. Johnson, her medical attendant and kind friend, fortunately lived close at hand, and soon was at the bedside ministering to his patient, and listening with much concern and interest to her very distressing story.

His first advice was, that a telegram should be despatched without delay to Sir Hector; and then a consultation was held as to the direction in which messengers had better be sent to gain tidings of the runaways. Several places were mentioned; but all considered most unlikely, considering the hour at which Car must have escaped.

“I say,” whispered Thomas to Mrs. Temple, “what do you think of my going to Glendinnon House, and asking there if they have seen Miss Caroline?”

“Glendinnon House!” exclaimed the Abi-

gail, who was as straight-laced and *bornée* in her ideas as her mistress. "What a notion! Do you think that a niece of Miss Eversfield's would ever have done such a thing as that? Why, Lord Glendinning's house is not a fit place for young ladies to go into, particularly in the middle of the night!"

"Well, I only know," answered Thomas, "that Mr. Courtier, his Lorship's valet, who bears about as indifferent a character as his Lord, has been prowling about this street for these ten days or more; and I know for certain that the French ma'amselle, who is a regular bad one, is a great friend of his. And I have heard her talk of Lord Glendinning being desperately in love with Miss Caroline. Lor, who knows but——"

Mr. Johnson prevented this speech being completed; nevertheless he took a hint from it, and saying he would soon return, went forth, and getting into a cab was soon in

Piccadilly, and at the door of Glendinnon House.

The window blinds were all drawn down, indicating the absence of the lord of the mansion, and the surly porter confirmed this fact, by saying, as he put out his head, that his Lordship had started for the Continent.

"May I ask when Lord Glendinnon left London?" Mr. Johnson inquired.

The man, looking insolently at the questioner, now shut the door, which he had only partly opened, in his face, muttering, "A week or more ago."

Lord Glendinnon's servants were quite accustomed to lie.

The distracted Miss Eversfield and her household had nothing more to do but to await the answer to the telegram.

* * * * *

It is one of the disadvantages, we think, of these march-of-intellect days, to live under the constant dread of telegrams; these

foretellers of trouble, far oftener than of pleasure or relief,—for the old proverb that “bad news flies fast” is now more than ever verified. For our part, we were quite satisfied with the good old times of a single post in the twenty-four hours, to have only one period of the day of anxious anticipation, when our hearts must flutter, and our hands tremble, as they grasp the paper messengers. That postman’s knock even! It is quite enough to make the poor, nervous overburthened *père* or *mère de famille*, forswear London and all such post-ridden localities.

But to return to our present telegram. Sir Hector had been completely upset by the last heavy blow which this sad disgraceful termination to Car’s engagement had dealt to him. His energies had been weakened by constant attendance on Lady Julia, by witnessing her sufferings, and knowing that he must soon lose a wife, beloved so tenderly. And now, in what a

position he was placed! The mother must never know this last act of her daughter. No; she must leave the world in blessed ignorance of her child's utter worthlessness.

"That I should have lived to realise the idea that her death would be gain;—yes, gain in every sense of the word! My poor darling Julia, it is indeed best that you should go; this world would henceforth be a miserable, a disgraced one to you;—and if it were not for these other children, how gladly would I pray to God to remove me also from all this distracting wretchedness."

Geraldine saw that Sir Hector was in no state to undertake a midnight journey, in short, that it was quite impossible. He could scarcely rise from the sofa on which he had thrown himself, after having read Lawless's letter, which had arrived by a second post. He was heart-stricken, the unfortunate father!

"For poor mamma's sake, be strong, dearest papa!" the good daughter urged. "She is better to-day, so you must not distress her by any appearance of suffering. Remember," she added, sadly, "what Dr. C. said,—the slightest agitation might produce very serious, (if not—yes, we must not forget the terrible truth—fatal) consequences. I can say you have a headache, and you might go to bed early. A night's quiet reflection will better enable you to see how to act in this terrible business. Oh, Car, Car, how wretched you make us all!"

* * * * *

The morning had now come, the unconscious mother had passed a better night, and was in more cheerful spirits. She was tired of her bed, she said, and had risen seated in an armchair, supported by pillows; Sir Hector by her side, helping her to breakfast, Lady Julia spoke more hopefully this morning; but alas, all she

said bore reference to the absent Car, and her approaching marriage.

"Indeed, dear Hector, the more I think of it, the more fortunate I consider our child. I really like the young man, and I am sure his attachment to Car has stood the strongest test—he has continued to love her, in spite of all her faults."

Sir Hector could scarcely suppress a groan.

"If I am only spared to see her married, it will be the greatest comfort to me, dearest," she continued, laying her thin hand upon his: "but what ails you, Hector? how very ill you look!"

Fenton now entered the room, holding in her hand a letter.

"A telegram, Sir Hector," she whispered, but the poor man, already so nervous and excited, alive to every fear of coming evil, forgot all caution, that his wife's life hung upon a thread so slender, that the slightest jar would snap it, and snatching the

missive from Fenton's hands he hastily tore it open, and read the words which seemed to blast his vision.

Starting up, with clenched hands and death-like countenance, he slowly spoke some low, deep words, heard, however, distinctly by the unfortunate mother, and rushed distractedly from the room.

Then his voice might be heard giving orders, in a loud, harsh, unnatural tone, that a carriage should come round immediately to convey him to the station, for the half maddened man remembered no longer even his dying wife. His thoughts were all curses, yes, curses on the man who he knew was the seducer, and still more horrid to think upon, curses on the child who had once held nearly the first place in his heart.

* * * * *

But, wretched husband, what sounds are these which now ring on your ears? shrieks of distress, and one voice, that of the usually

calm Geraldine. For a moment Sir Hector stood transfixed with terror, the next, and he had rushed up-stairs, and was in the passage leading to Lady Julia's room, the door of which was open, and from which Nurse Nelson was hurriedly issuing.

"Oh, Sir Hector, do not go in, it is of no use, *she's dead!*" and as if he had also received his death-blow, this man, a lion-hearted soldier on the battle-field, but tender as a woman in his home affections, fell lifeless to the ground.

CHAPTER XXII.

LINDA's disappearance from her bedroom, when reported to Lady Curraghmore, had created considerable alarm, particularly to Lord Curraghmore, who, really anxious as to the safety of his niece, gave way to bursts of anger, which, in his intercourse with his lady he generally had managed to repress, it being no use, he said, getting into a passion with her, a regular waste of powder and shot.

But now, in no measured terms, he accused her as the cause of his niece's disappearance:

"And if the girl is dead, has made away with herself, goaded by the misery of living

with you, Lady Curraghmore, her death may be laid at your door!"

But her ladyship's fears did not point that way, though she thought this freak of the odious girl most troublesome and impertinent; and soon every doubt of her personal safety was put to flight, by Linda's maid having discovered that several articles of apparel were missing, also a carpet-bag, and Miss Linda's trinket-box, — so, that she had absconded was clearly the case.

But this did not satisfy Lord Curraghmore; still he continued to inveigh against his stern wife as the cause of all. Inquiries were set on foot, and the intelligence was elicited that a carriage had been seen by some gamekeepers, in the middle of the night, in the road not far from the house, but they knew not to whom it belonged. And it was further traced to A——, the nearest post-town; but the innkeeper, from whom it was hired, could only tell that a

gentleman had engaged the vehicle, but it was too dark, and the person was too much covered by his dress for anyone to ascertain who he was; a lady had returned in the carriage, which was driven at once to the railway station, and there the driver saw the gentleman place the lady in one carriage, and take his seat in another. It was too dark and foggy to enable him to ascertain their identity.

"The depraved girl, then, has eloped with some lover," was Lady Curraghmore's indignant remark; and she further added: "I hope that you are now satisfied with this, Lord Curraghmore, and that you will please to leave my presence now, and for ever. It is not sufficient that you must bring under my roof a girl, whose very blood is tainted by being the daughter of an actress — and whose disgraceful conduct shows how innately depraved she must be — but you presume to overwhelm me with the lowest abuse."

We will not detail the scene that followed, suffice it to say, that Lord and Lady Curraghmore were parted, from that hour, never even to keep up the show of conjugality by living, disunited as they had been for years, under the same roof.

Lord Curraghmore started instantly for England to consult Lord and Lady Sunderland; also his son, as to what steps were to be taken to gain tidings of Linda.

But no Norman was to be found in London, he had not been heard of in Grosvenor Square; but, at last, from Captain Asheton, he discovered that his son had been in London, but no further trace could be discovered of his whereabouts; Lord Curraghmore also ascertained that the Sunderland family were not in town; and, finally, in much anxiety, thought it best to proceed to Belfield, in hopes of hearing there some tidings of one, at least, of the missing ones. It was the distressing news he carried there of Linda's

disappearance, which had brought Lady Sunderland to Carleton Gardens, where, my readers may remember, Mrs. Davis repaired to detail the history of Linda's arrival, and the extraordinary events which followed her appearance.

It was on the morning after Mrs. Davis's most distressing story, and the further catastrophe of Linda's having quitted her house, that the paragraph announcing the marriage appeared in the newspapers — filling all those who were acquainted with the individuals it mentioned with the most unfeigned amazement.

Captain Lawless — engaged to another woman — the wedding-day even fixed — it was incomprehensible! The Sunderlands were much distressed; they really loved Linda, and were deeply interested in her fate. And now what could have become of her? what would be her lot, linked for ever to a man who had proved himself as unprincipled as cold-blooded?

But what could they do?—they were shocked, disgusted! The girl so carefully reared by them to have thus disgraced herself! They were indignant, as well as sorely grieved; though Lady Sunderland's kind heart still urged some steps being taken to discover what had become of the unfortunate girl.

But both Lord Sunderland and his son decided that the matter for the present must rest—Linda was legally married to Captain Lawless, and she must abide by the consequences. Of course, by this time she must have joined him, wherever he might be.

Unqualified indignation now usurped the place of the warm affection they had hitherto felt towards Linda, who, by such an unheard-of act, had so deceived them as to her character—this deed of duplicity and flagrant disregard of every honourable feeling was, indeed, unpardonable in their eyes, for well Linda had known that the

man with whom she had eloped was on the very eve of marrying another woman.

They could not, however, but sympathise with Lord Curraghmore, who was—and no wonder, poor man!—at his wits' end upon the subject. No tidings could be gained of his son, he had left no intimation of his whereabouts with his regiment or his agents; all they could tell him was that Captain Lawless had drawn large sums of money lately, in short, considerably overdrawn his account—but this was all the information they could afford.

For the first time in his life, this light-hearted son of the Emerald Isle was fairly discomfited; and Lady Sunderland entered kindly into all his feelings, as the poor man sat by her side, and, with tears falling from his eyes, pondered and lamented over the folly and perfidy of his son.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SOME months had elapsed since the events of the dark November we have recorded in the commencement of this story.

It was the time when Paris was at its climax of fashionable dissipation—no breath of which was suffered to pollute the almost conventional atmosphere of the retired mansion in the Faubourg St. Germain, or disturb its quiet studious routine.

All had gone well, apparently, with Linda since we left her domiciled under the kindly stranger's roof; Mrs. Grandison had found no reason to repent the generous confidence she had yielded to her mysterious protégée, in spite of the suspicious circumstances attending her case, and the

utter silence respecting her antecedents the young widow persisted in maintaining from day to day. The pupils assembled—a few well-born, carefully selected girls; and Mrs. Grandison found she had gained a most valuable and efficient instructress, in the accomplished Rosa Lindsey, whose musical talents, especially, were of so first-rate an order.

With zeal and energy, too, she seemed to give herself to her task, as if anxious by present exertion, however arduous, to absorb the memory of some painful past.

Poor Linda, indeed, had greatly changed—her whole character was transformed.

The childish impetuosity Mrs. Grandison had observed in her bearing during their first acquaintance, soon gradually died away, and she became subdued and tranquil enough to satisfy the most particular *maîtresse de pension*. The first excitement of the secret misfortune under which she laboured on her arrival in France, having

passed away, it was succeeded by a forced and painful resignation to an unnatural and blighted destiny, most touching in one so young and of so passionate and impulsive a temperament. Her pupils loved and admired her; her fellow-teachers treated her with the respect and consideration due to one they intuitively felt was of a sphere and order superior to themselves; Mrs. Grandison's affection and kindness increased every day. It was, indeed, well with Linda, as we have said; and, if so it had been suffered to continue, in time, perhaps, her spirit even might have rebounded from the heavy burden which crushed down its youthfulness, and cut her off from all hope and happiness, save in having found a secure and secret shelter within these gloomy walls. But to this peaceful monotony within La Maison Grandison, there came one day a startling interruption.

One Sunday after morning service, which Mrs. Grandison, her English teachers and

pupils, attended at the nearest English chapel, Mrs. Lindsey had absented herself from the dinner-table when the family assembled round it, at the usual early hour, pleading a bad headache. Dinner was sent to her room ; but, on Mrs. Grandison herself ascending to that little chamber adjoining her own, which her protégée had continued to occupy, she found the food still there untasted, and the room empty !

After waiting a short time, in expectation of her appearance, Mrs. Grandison proceeded to inquire for Mrs. Lindsey in the schoolroom, and other apartments of the house ; but she had been seen by no one, since the maid had taken up her dinner, when Mrs. Lindsey was seated, the servant said, looking very ill and pale, still in her walking-dress, and had said she feared she could not eat.

Neither was she in the garden, when search was made there, whilst the *concierger*, happening to be at his dinner, could give

no information as to any one having left the house.

But that she must surely have done so soon became evident. Mrs. Grandison, at first only surprised, became seriously alarmed, the more so when an incident transpired, through one of the pupils, which the young lady had found previously no opportunity to retail—Sunday gossip not being allowed at the dinner table, nor indeed on any other public occasion, in the well-ordered establishment over which the refined and strict-minded Mrs. Grandison reigned.

This young girl reported, that coming out of church, she, with Mrs. Lindsey, being behind the rest of the party, just at the bottom of the stairs leading from the retired pew the school party occupied in the gallery, a man, apparently a gentleman, pushed past them, thrusting a paper into her companion's hand. Mrs. Lindsey had taken it, and looked at its contents, stop-

ping short evidently much surprised and startled; but the thick veil she always wore being down, she could not see her countenance.

Of course the school girl's curiosity and interest were much excited by this adventure; she had whispered an inquiry as to who the person could be, and what he had given her.

"Only a paper, a petition," Linda had faltered, grasping the girl's arm to steady herself, as she looked at the paper.

"Nothing, nothing, my dear Miss Vivian, the man is a madman, I think;" and then she had hurried on after the rest of the party, crushing the paper in her hand, as she went out, and casting it from her on the ground.

No one had observed any difference in Mrs. Lindsey's demeanour afterwards, except that she was silent on her way home.

Miss Vivian had mentioned the little

adventure to the young lady who shared her room, whilst taking off their walking dress; she had not the least doubted the truth of the young governess's supposition, that the person who had given her the paper was mad. There was something very wild about his appearance, it appeared to her, from the glimpse she caught of him, though he was decidedly a gentleman, young, and of a distinguished mien. He scarcely seemed to look at Mrs. Lindsey, but thrust the paper almost rudely upon her, and rushed past.

Mrs. Grandison waited in intense anxiety, several hours of the afternoon, in earnest hope and expectation that Linda would return. Her utter ignorance as to the nature of her protégée's previous history, left her imagination open to every possible suspicion and doubt, yet such was the strong confidence in her innocence and virtue with which the poor girl had inspired her kind friend, that it was fear for

Linda's safety, rather than any idea of treachery or evil, with which this mysterious disappearance, joined with the adventure at the chapel door, inspired her. But she waited in vain; and then as evening advanced, having sent her pupils as usual with the other English governess, a staid elderly lady, to the evening service, she ordered a *fiacre*, and with the French teacher, was about to sally forth to the Bureau de Police, there to claim the aid for such emergencies so well provided in the metropolis of France; when Mrs. Lindsey appeared.

CHAPTER XXIV.

It had been, indeed, as if a thunder-bolt had fallen at Linda's feet, the sudden apparition of Norman Lawless before her at the entrance to the chapel. How she comprehended the contents of the paper he thrust into her hands, she could not imagine afterwards, such was the confusion of mind, and the horrible agitation, the incident occasioned her. But in that brief hurried glance, she had taken in the meaning of those strange wildly-written words, and remembered them distinctly.

"You cannot any longer escape me, Linda. I have seen you. Come to me at the Hôtel de Rue St. Honoré: it is a case of life or death.

"N. L."

She comprehended more too. She had spoken her real conviction to the young lady by her side, when she said, "He is a madman." In the wild glare of the eye, which had flashed so instantaneously upon her fearfully, in the altered ghastly countenance, she had clearly read insanity.

Yes, Norman was surely mad, and she must go to him, save him, a second time, perhaps from some still more desperate fate, whatever happened. She was his wife, and must see to his safety; sacrifice herself again, run any risk, if it were necessary. She did not pause to calculate the danger; there had been something very desperate in the look he cast upon her; but that did not signify—he bade her come now, as he had once desired her to leave him, and for better or for worse, their fates were united.

She was quite unconscious of anything but this one intent during her return home, and when there was only bent on awaiting the favourable moment for leaving the

house again without observation. She had presence of mind to send her excuses to Mrs. Grandison, with tolerable composure ; and to wait for the servant's arrival upstairs with the inevitable dinner ; then she stealthily slipped downstairs, out of the house which had so kindly sheltered her ; was soon in the open streets, and entering a *fiacre*, gave orders that she should be driven to the hotel appointed.

She felt no excitement of any sort, either of fear, or hope, or love, or great anxiety, only a dull, drear sense of doing her duty, or fulfilling some new part of her strange destiny.

When she stopped at the hotel, and inquired directly for Captain Lawless, the *concierge* who came forward stared at her, and told her he knew of no such person.

"Are you quite sure ?" Linda demanded earnestly, as one or two of the *garçons* came forward to confirm the former statement, and both protested that there was no

such English gentleman staying in the house.

Linda paused to consider—then persisted,

“But the gentleman may not have given his name; he gave me his direction, and appointed me to visit him; he is pale, with light eyes and hair,” and in her eager solicitude, she otherwise described his personal appearance.

The men, disposed at first to treat her application with careless *insouciance*, were irresistibly impressed by this earnest simplicity, combined with a certain innocent dignity of look and manner which defied suspicion. They allowed at last that there was such a gentleman in the house at that moment, answering to her description; he had been there, indeed, a week, but they did not know his name; and he did not appear exactly in a state of mind to receive lady visitors.

The *maître-d' hôtel* had been considering

whether it would not be right to send for medical assistance. Should they tell him she was there? Would the lady send up her name?

"No," Linda answered after a moment's thought; "I will go to him at once. I am his near relation," she added hesitatingly, she had almost said his wife, but the widow's cap she still retained, prevented her. "I know he is ill, in mind. I have come to see what can be done for him."

The steps were let down, and she descended. The *garçons* named *numero 32 au troisième*, for the hotel had been quite full on the gentleman's arrival, and Linda, beginning to ascend the stairs, was left to find her way to the room accordingly.

She might have had some difficulty if a *frotteur* she met busily employed at his vocation had not directed her; for a small flight of steps led up to the apartment Lawless occupied—two small rooms, leading one out of the other, being the only ones at liberty when he first arrived.

The hotel was a very respectable one, though it was quite by accident he had been driven there, and was not one of those most generally resorted to by the élite.

When Linda stood at length at the right door, she paused a moment ere she knocked to take breath and listen. What she heard was not at all calculated to allay her misgiving, the footsteps of a man moving quickly about the room, were audible; joined to the opening and shutting of drawers; and other sounds symptomatic of purposeless, restless disturbance.

It was a relief, perhaps, to her mind to know that the *frotteur* to whom she had addressed herself, was watching her still with natural curiosity and astonishment; and would probably remain in this vicinity. She knocked at last; the door was immediately thrown open, and Norman Lawless, pale, haggard, with bloodshot eyes, confronted her.

"Norman, I am come," she faltered.

"Thank you, Linda," he answered in a tone which almost reassured her, it was only very much as he had spoken at Lough Rea, the night before their elopement. Then he took hold of her wrist and drew her into the apartment, locking the door behind her.

Instinctively she went and sat down by an open window ; it looked down upon a large court, into which the *salle à manger* opened ; also a small *salle de compagnie*, in which some one was playing a piano-forte. With the keen-sighted suspicion of a disordered mind, Lawless had evidently divined her choice of this position ; closing the window, and fastening the bolt, he murmured,

"That cursed piano, it distracts me ; let us shut it out. I have a great deal to say to you, Linda, we must have no disturbance to our conversation, my dear little cousin."

"What can I do for you, Norman?"

Linda inquired soothingly, determined to show no sign of fear, though her heart sank inwardly with terror. "You know I was always ready to help you."

"Yes, I knew you would not fail me. I have been looking for you everywhere; I thought they had shut you up; it was a lucky chance that I caught sight of you going into the chapel. Though you had disguised yourself in this ridiculous manner, I should have known your walk and figure amongst a thousand, a pretty little figure, though not like hers," he added, and his features, which had calmed before, now worked convulsively.

"I have been living at a school, with a very kind lady," Linda said, anxious to divert his mind from this dangerous allusion. "I am very happy there."

But he did not listen to her, only continued, "Not like hers, the beautiful fiend, whom we both hate so cordially; do not we, Linda?"

"No, we must not hate her," Linda answered gently, but firmly; "we must pity and pray for her that she may be made better, though perhaps we cannot love her."

"Love her,—I should think not," he exclaimed with a fearful laugh; "we must try and rid the world of her before she does more mischief, stings more men's souls."

"Where is she?" Linda asked, seeing that to reason was useless, and thinking it better to humour him.

"With the demon she has married," he answered. "I read their names in Italy upon every hotel-book, but could not catch them. They are in England now,—I read it in Galignani;—you and I will go there together. Fine tricks they will play in London, if they are left unpunished."

"Shall we go now?" Linda said almost too eagerly, for his eye immediately betrayed suspicion.

"Wait a minute," he said, "we must not go unarmed: do you know how to use a pistol? If not, shall have to teach you. Look here!"

He walked hastily into the adjoining sleeping-apartment, the one they occupied was fitted up with couch and mirror, and other drawing-room adornments.

Linda looked at the window, a man was in the court. She made a sign to him, then springing to the door, unbolted it. But the movement, slight as was its sound, had attracted the attention of Lawless, who reappeared holding a pistol in each hand; one of which—at the same time exclaiming, "Little traitress, little traitress!"—he pointed towards Linda, who sinking on her knees shrieked forth, "O Norman, do not kill me!"

But her terror on that account was unfounded; the pistols happily were not loaded.

The *frotteur*, however, who had heard the cry, knocked at the door and asked if

they had called him. The *garçon*, too, had flown upstairs, and both appearing on the threshold, Lawless directed his ineffectual aim at both their heads, then laughing loud, called them a pack of cowards; that his cousin and he were only practising shooting.

They saw, however, the state of the case at once. Linda now stood pale and firm again; and by an expressive look, signalled her desire that they would seek medical assistance—but also that she had in the interval no further fear of being left alone with the poor patient. It was a terrible half-hour that she thus passed, though Lawless was comparatively calm and rational, suspecting probably that he was not left entirely unwatched or unguarded.

He, however, spoke incoherently, and wildly on the subject of his past wrongs; and the revenge which with Linda's assistance he meditated. But he was gentle, almost tender in his expressions to his little cousin, as he called her, who had been

always so eager to help to extricate him from the "beautiful fiend;" and had so truly loved him. As to the celebration of any marriage between them ever having taken place, that appeared entirely obliterated from his memory. He seemed to look upon her in some way as a fellow victim, but to have no clear conception of anything concerning her real circumstances towards him.

At last footsteps were heard approaching. The *maitre-d'hôtel* who had been absent on Linda's first arrival, entered to say a gentleman wished to speak with Captain Lawless—and the doctor from a private asylum entered.

With professional ingenuity he contrived to introduce himself, and enter into conversation with the maniac,—after a few sentences interchanged, with a glance at Linda, requesting he would allow him the favour of a private interview, having a message concerning some rather important business he had received for him from England.

The doctor's assistant stood outside, one who had been directed to communicate with the lady, and receive her instructions, and all necessary information concerning the patient. The name and parentage of the deranged man, and the unhappy events which had doubtless led to this his present mental condition, were detailed by Linda. She was almost certain that no hereditary disease was in the family. As to the question, what relationship existed between herself and Captain Lawless, she named herself as only his cousin — for, all other considerations set aside, she began to doubt in her own mind whether an act committed under a state of madness, such as had probably commenced at the time of their marriage, could hold good in a legal sense. She then stated her immediate intention of writing to Lord Curraghmore ; till his arrival, or directions could be obtained, she entreated that if possible Captain Lawless might remain at the hotel under proper custody, rather than be re-

moved to the asylum. This, however, on further consultation with his principal, which the assistant managed to obtain before their departure, was not deemed advisable; and, with the miserable satisfaction that the comfort and safety of the unfortunate young man could thus be more surely relied upon, Linda, with anguished feelings, was informed that his conveyance from the hotel had been quietly and securely managed.

She remained there to write her letter to her uncle—briefly detailing everything that had happened to her since she had last beheld him; her strange marriage, and immediate separation from his son; the circumstances under which she had dwelt since then, until that day; concluding more fully with the distressful history of her meeting with Lawless, his unhappy condition of mind, and the medical custody under which it had been necessary to place him,—entreating her uncle to lose no time

in coming to Paris, and sharing her sorrowful responsibility.

She ended by imploring his forgiveness for the rash step she had been led to take, against her own reason, from her love and pity for Norman; gave Lord Curraghmore her direction at Mrs. Grandison's, declaring her readiness, if so permitted, to devote herself to Norman as soon as his malady allowed of such attendance—but only as the cousin he now alone remembered her, the sister as in former days he had so affectionately regarded her, and as such in his natural state of mind he would still, she was certain, wish her to be.

Then, sending the letter to the post, and giving the hotel people guarantee that the debt Mr. Lawless had incurred there would be satisfied, a *fiacre* was ordered, and she was driven back, in a state of much nervous exhaustion, to the Faubourg St. Germain, and reappeared like a pale ghost before Mrs. Grandison's anxious eyes.

CHAPTER XXV.

MRS. GRANDISON'S great anxiety thus appeased, she received her young friend rather sternly.

"This is strange conduct, Mrs. Lindsey," she began. "Your unaccountable absence from my house has naturally caused me much uneasiness, and created an excitement amongst the young ladies very disturbing and unsettling to their minds, unsuitable especially, too, on a Sunday."

Linda had sunk down at once upon her knees by Mrs. Grandison's side, and it was to give her time, perhaps, to recover herself that the good lady spoke thus, for she saw well, by the expression on Linda's face as she entered, that she had gone through some terrible excitement during her absence, and that the time for some startling disclosure had arrived.

"Pray rise, and compose yourself, Mrs. Lindsey," she again said, more kindly, but still coldly. "I am quite prepared for some painful, though, I trust, satisfactory explanation. It would have been better, perhaps, had you confided to me your history before (for your own comfort, I mean; I do not speak with any reference to my own feelings). You shall have a glass of wine, for you look very faint—nay, if you prefer it, you can now go to bed, and wait till to-morrow."

"No, no," Linda murmured, rising almost immediately with dignity. "You shall know all, my kind friend, which I have thought it right, unwisely perhaps, to conceal from you—anxious to hide myself from the world, and all my former relations. You will soon be made sure of the truth of my statements, for I have written to my uncle, Lord Curraghmore—he will be soon in Paris. My real name is Rosalinda Lawless, both by birth and marriage."

Then to the astonished and much interested Mrs. Grandison, Linda detailed her whole history; at the close of which her listener silently embraced the poor girl, much affected.

"I compassionate you sincerely," she then said; "you sacrificed yourself indeed rashly and blindly, and have been made the victim of the wickedness of others; but if weak and imprudent in your conduct, you have no guilt to reproach yourself with, and as God has hitherto sheltered you from the consequences of your error, may He continue to preserve you, and in the end cause all this misery to work for good. Eversfield! is it possible that the wretched cause of so much evil, is the sister of that dear good girl, once with me for a few months, but who was recalled home, much to my regret, at the end of that time, owing to the illness of her mother, and other family troubles? Had she ever a sister Car?"

"Yes, that is her," Linda interrupted, "the wretched cause, as you say, of so much

misery. What has become of her now, I know not, nor whether to believe the dreadful things my poor cousin in his ravings let fall about her."

"Yes, I was going to tell you, I remember being shocked and astonished to see but a day or two after our arrival in Paris last November, the marriage of this very sister (whom I had heard my late pupil Geraldine sometimes sorrowfully allude to), announced in the 'Times,' to the Earl of Glendinnon, the death of whose former lady I had particularly remarked in the paper of the preceding morning."

Poor Linda closed her eyes faintly for a moment; she saw plainly all now, what she had only suspected before; how Norman had been goaded to madness; how she had been indeed sacrificed, to wreak another's vengeance.

She had immolated herself, and had not saved Norman from a terrible fate. But she did not even now regret that sacrifice, she thought not of herself, she loved Norman

with too pure and selfish a love, she had not shrunk from him even in his madness, she would be faithful to him unto death.

Linda had gone to bed much exhausted by the time the young ladies returned ; Mrs. Grandison merely telling them that Mrs. Lindsey had come back soon after they left the house, having explained her absence in a painful but satisfactory manner, — that she had been in short to visit an afflicted relative whose unhappy circumstances she had shrunk from revealing.

The next day Mrs. Grandison herself accompanied Linda to the asylum to inquire after the unhappy Norman.

The physician's report was satisfactory. Perfect quiet and salutary restraint had already worked a beneficial effect upon the patient, he was more calm and rational.

By the time Lord Curraghmore arrived the doctor hoped the worst crisis would have passed, and the sight of so near a relative need not be denied him.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE sight of Linda's handwriting had been hailed by poor Lord Curraghmore with joy. Cut off from his own family, dependent on the Sunderlands for sympathy, his anxiety on his son's account began to tell upon his spirit sadly.

Linda's treachery began to weigh far less in the balance than the loss of her society, and the mutual desertion of both his son and his little favourite; so when the Paris letter was put into his hands, his heart revived.

They were coming back to him at last.

Linda no doubt had written to beg his pardon, and the warm-hearted man had forgiven her before he broke the seal.

What he read plunged him again into wretchedness as well as surprise.

Linda not with her husband all this time — his boy Norman mad, in confinement.

It was distracting, heart-rending. He would have him home at once, mad or not; he should not be out of his own care.

Fortunately he was in London when he received the letter; the Sunderlands, too, were there, and Lord Sinclair, who determined to accompany the afflicted father to Paris: Lady Elizabeth had died two months before.

Lady Sunderland's bereaved heart once more opened with indulgent kindness towards the poor victim of a too impulsive, but yet generous and self-sacrificing nature; she was filled with compassion for the fate of one she loved so well, and writing an affectionate and forgiving letter, offered her once more a home beneath her roof.

The meeting between Linda and her uncle was deeply affecting; Lord Curraghmore had seen his son, who had not recognised him, only the sight of his father

had struck some chord of association in Norman's mind, and he had asked for Linda, his little cousin; and the father had come, therefore, by the doctor's permission, to take Linda to see his son.

The experiment was satisfactory, her presence, instead of exciting, seemed to soothe and gratify the patient, and she was suffered to remain, by her earnest entreaty, and occasionally to share the service of the regular attendants.

The case was evidently not considered one of deep-seated madness, but the crisis of a terrible course of excitement, which had seriously, but it was to be trusted not fatally, affected the brain.

A long course of soothing treatment and judicious restraint, might lead to his perfect restoration.

Some months longer, therefore, the invalid remained in Paris, consciousness gradually dawning on his mind, though the memory of the past was still partially

obscured, especially that part of it immediately preceding his madness.

It seemed that he had been travelling about, in a purposeless manner on the Continent, for the few months preceding his arrival in Paris and his meeting with Linda, with a vague idea of inflicting some terrible revenge on the Glendinnons, the event of whose elopement and marriage soon after his own mad marriage with his cousin, had probably precipitated the insanity, under the latent influence of which, he had acted ever since the morning of her arrival in London, and the discovery of Car's perfidious breaking of her vow.

This insanity, indeed, had so far been kept under restraint, as in strangers' eyes, to amount only to a high state of eccentricity; not until this late arrival in Paris had it broken bounds and showed itself so dangerous to himself and others as in his interview with Linda.

From the time of his partial recovery,

the presence and attendance of his "little cousin," as he still continued to call her, appeared to offer him relief and gratification.

"How comes it, Linda," he said one day in the early stage of his amendment, "that you and my father have got clear of the old lady so capitally; we three get on famously together, make a wonderfully peaceful trio, though we all seem to be turned upside down somehow? The old Lord's become tame as a mouse; and you, Linda, pale and demure as a nun, or a *sœur de charité*. As for myself, I feel as if I had been underground for ages, and just dug up again."

"You have been ill, Norman, but, you are better now. Your father and I will become livelier soon; of course we have been anxious." He looked at her earnestly.

"But when I am well, you are not to leave me, Linda. I am not going to be turned loose on the world again, amongst

the "beautiful fiends," to get into mischief (and a troubled cloud of remembrance seemed dawning on his pallid features).

It was all the allusion he ever made to the past, either at this time, or in the future. A month after the doctors pronounced Lawless fit to travel to his own country, in the company of his father and his little cousin.

They went to London, and from thence to the family seat in Ireland.

CHAPTER XXVII.

FIVE years have passed, and all is changed; everything approaching to gloom has vanished from the scene; and in the countenances of the *dramatis personæ* who now appear, in this concluding act of our story, wholesome happiness is the striking characteristic.

Yes, we say wholesome household happiness; not that feverish glow of excitement the pleasures of the great world create in the expression of those countenances whose joys are derived from its vitiated sources:—

“ All the joys of sense
Lie in three words, Health, Peace, and Temperance.
But health consists with temperance alone;
And peace—O virtue! peace is all thy own.”

Thus we may describe the present condition of the Lawless trio, the father, son

and Linda, transformed, indeed, since we last saw them — peace the characteristic of the expression of their countenances.

It is at Castle Lawless that we again find Linda, her pretty little figure improved by having grown more full and womanly, but her face looking as young, and far handsomer, than when we last saw the pale little girl; and we noticed in her expression a serenity not before to be seen in that of the impulsive Linda of old.

It seems as if something more than usually important was going on at Castle Lawless this day, for preparations are making on a grand scale for a rural festival; long tables are being laid out for a dinner to be given to the retainers and tenantry of the Castle; and Linda, leaning upon Lord Curraghmore's arm, is walking here and there, watching with interest the preparations, making suggestions and giving orders, as to the proper arrangement of every department of the banquet.

Soon she is joined by another actress in

the day's concern—one whom we have not seen before; a little girl seemingly about three years old; a little fairy with dark hair and eyes, who flies towards them, taking shelter in her grandfather's arms from the attendant who pursues her, for the holiday garb had not yet been put on, and the time for her appearance had not properly arrived.

The fact is, that this is the christening feast of the much desired heir of the house of Curraghmore; and Elizabeth, the little daughter and only child for three long years, is now deposed by her more important brother.

Yes, Linda has been a very happy wife; and although for the first tried years of her married life she had to encounter much anxiety, owing to the uncertain state of her husband's nervous condition, all that had happily passed away, and Norman was an altered man, not only in bodily health, but in mental strength and feeling.

He loved his little wife sincerely, and

could now look back with horror, with regret, to the days of his enthrallment.

They had a nominal home in London, but at Castle Lawless the family spent the most part of the year, Norman taking an absorbing interest in restoring and beautifying the splendid old place, at which Lord Curraghmore almost entirely resided.

He, too, was much changed: removed from the atmosphere of his wife's presence, he seemed to lay aside amusements, which before, for lack of domestic happiness, constituted the only solace he enjoyed. Purer and simpler pleasures now filled up his time; he entered into all his son's views with regard to the place; and now, when the beholder gazes at the beautiful mansion, its surrounding gardens, parterres, and pleasure-grounds, the rich, well-ordered farms and cultivated glades, it is a marvel to think that this is the place a few years back thought to be irretrievably gone to rack and ruin. In Ireland, such another perfect model of a nobleman's estate could

scarcely be found ; all around in keeping, as far as is possible, in a country not famed for its love of neatness and regularity.

But the old tenantry loved the old lord (as they called him), and the young one with the jewel of a wife, who was so kind to every one.

And all about the estate seemed bettered and purified by the softening power of affection and example. Thus years passed by in peace and happiness, no wish ungratified, save the non-arrival of an heir. And now he had come. And it was Linda's delight, this day, to congregatè around her all those she so dearly loved, to witness the christening of the important child : the beloved Sutherland family ; her generous, confiding friend, Mrs. Grandison, now accompanied by her son so long absent in India :

" Ah, Linda, my darling ! " Lord Curraghmore exclaimed ; " I should be a great deal too happy to-day were it not for this freak of yours. Oh, why did you insist upon this reconciliation ! and that

my Lady Curraghmore should come here to-day; indeed, I scarcely think I can stand it; I must really run away and hide myself."

"Oh, no, dear father, I shall hold you fast, and I know you will behave well and kindly!"

"Oh, then, if it is only for the little while you have promised, I will try! But let nobody ask me to live with her again entirely, we can just visit occasionally, that will be quite enough for me; and by my troth, girl, I feel at this moment all of a tremble, at the idea of again encountering the woman."

"Oh, father, remember how unhappy she has been; I hear she is quite an altered woman; how differently she writes!"

"Ah, and to be sure, so she does, poor creature, and no wonder. It is sorrowful to lose a child; and to my lady, still worse to have a daughter who has wounded her pride. She felt that marriage of Margaret's, I'll be bound to say, far more than poor Isabella's death; but, either way, it has taken a great

deal out of her, seemingly, or she'd have never consented to come here—— and by my troth, Linda, darling, here she is !”

And Lord Curraghmore's ruddy face actually turned pale.

“Upon my conscience, I shall never be able to encounter the dowager !” and he really struggled to free himself from Linda, who, however, clung resolutely to him, and dragged him on towards the portico, under which a travelling carriage had just drawn up, in which was also Norman, who had escorted his mother.

The next moment Lord Curraghmore was kindly and gently assisting his son, who sprang from the carriage, to almost lift out an attenuated, infirm-looking old woman, whom Linda could scarcely recognise as the erect and strong-framed, formidable Lady of Lough Rea, and whom her son was so affectionately welcoming to Lawless Castle ; which welcome was more vociferously, though very kindly, echoed by Lord Curraghmore.

Lady Curraghmore had, indeed, been brought low, and was now bent to the earth by sorrow, and no wonder. Her daughter, Mrs. Craigie, had died in her confinement. Margaret, the elder sister, had eloped with a young man, a clerk in the office of the family solicitor, who had been sent to Lough Rea upon some business, and had been obliged to remain there some weeks. He was a handsome young man, and, having an eye to the main chance and Miss Lawless's fortune (settled absolutely upon herself on her marriage), soon came to the determination of raising himself through her means.

For once in her life Lady Curraghmore was completely hoodwinked, and saw nothing that was going on, until a letter was put into her hands one morning, found in her daughter's room, saying the usual words, which we believe are generally used upon such occasions, that when her ladyship should receive it, the writer would be—"Her affectionate daughter, MARGARET DAWSON."

At the same time a letter was placed in the frantic mother's hands, requesting her to repair to Craigie, her daughter having given birth to a dead child, and herself sinking rapidly. Lady Curraghmore arrived only to receive the last breath of a daughter who, until this final parting, she knew not that she loved so well. Lady Curraghmore's frigid heart had really felt acutely the desertion of her husband and son, although she had maintained till now her usual cold, stern demeanour. Inwardly she had long chafed, her efforts to keep up the appearance of indifference becoming more and more impossible.

Now the ice-bound barrier gave way; the desolate woman sunk at once; husband, son, and daughter—all gone—for Margaret was worse than dead to her henceforth.

A terrible fit of illness was the consequence; but her cry throughout was that no mention of her state was to be made

to her husband and son. She struggled through it, but was left a shattered wreck: her nerves all shaken, her health for ever departed.

It was during Linda's convalescence, that at last the family at Lough Rea received from some mutual friend a hint of Lady Curraghmore's wretched condition; and Norman required very little entreaty from his wife to set off immediately to his mother; and Lord Curraghmore's really kind heart felt sorry for the miserable woman, and with some faint attempts at hesitation and only a few wry faces, consented that she should be invited to visit them at Lawless Castle.

"She shall be no trouble to you, dear father, or to any one. Mrs. Lewes will nurse and take care of her. She is so ill and suffering, that it will be a comfort to us all to be kind to her."

Mrs. Lewes. Yes, Linda's first best friend in trouble; that friend who, by God's mercy, was the first who spoke

words to her which changed her heart, her every feeling,—who made her acquainted not only with herself, but with the things belonging to her peace; that good, kind woman who had befriended her when she was a poor desolate wanderer on the verge perhaps of ruin.

Immediately when Linda (accompanied by her husband and Lord Curraghmore) went to London, on Norman's convalescence, she sought out this excellent woman, and when the family went to Ireland every arrangement had been made: the stock of her little shop was disposed of, and Mrs. Lewes, accompanying them to Castle Lawless, there became the right hand of every individual of the family, acting as housekeeper and superintendent of the household, and in her own apartments visited by Linda, Norman, and Lord Curraghmore as a most valued friend.

Georgy was sent to a good school, and spent his holidays with his mother at Lawless Castle, as great a favourite with

Linda as in those days when he—the little pale boy—so kindly befriended her in the small shop in Upper Oxford Street.

Lady Curraghmore revived in a measure in the atmosphere of kindness in which she now existed; but her health was never restored. She, however, was not again separated from her family; confined entirely to her own suite of apartments, she lived a few years longer, her heart softening and changing day by day. And with good Mrs. Lewes, as well as her children, to be kind to her, her latter days were full of peace and hope. So changed indeed was her nature, that she even consented to see Mr. and Mrs. Dawson, and accord to her daughter her perfect forgiveness.

And leaving this reunited family as happy as it is possible for human beings to be in a world of constant change and trouble, we must take our final leave of them, and say a few words about poor Car, before we finally let down the curtain. A far less cheerful theme it will be!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FIVE years have also passed over the head of Lady Glendinnon, the Car Eversfield of other days.

Yes, she is a countess now, with rank and station, splendid mansions and equipages, a princely establishment, and *carte blanche* to spend what she pleases on herself; but have all these rich adjuncts to the enjoyments of life made her happy?

The expression of her face is also completely altered; but how different is the change to that which we noted on the countenances of those whom we depicted in the last chapter; for when I gaze down upon her from my out-of-the-way pew in the gallery of — Chapel, she little imagining what prying eyes are upon her,

I cannot help sighing whilst thinking how wretched she looks! Car Eversfield's beauty always consisted more in her brilliant colouring, the liveliness of her expression, the joyous mirth sparkling in her fine eyes, and the rounded contour of her youthful figure, than in any classic style of loveliness.

I must confess that often whilst in church, my thoughts are carried irresistibly away from the one absorbing theme which ought wholly to engross my mind within those sacred walls, and I find my eyes fixing themselves with speculating earnestness upon the countenance of the once blooming, thoughtlessly happy girl, whom, having known from her childhood, I cannot help still regarding with sorrowful interest.

Car's face is now quite colourless and thin, even haggard; but her countenance is still restless (for I observe her continually looking around her, as if in expectation of seeing something or somebody. Perhaps—

we know not—of meeting some old longed-for familiar face), and her eyes have a fixed, dull look, very different from the vivacious, joyous, sparkling expression of former times.

Her dress is handsome; it seems composed of rich materials, left to the choice of the mantua maker, and put on, without interference on her part, by a lady's maid. Not like that of Car Eversfield, always studying for effect, and adjusted with a certain jaunty air, adding to the piquancy of her appearance; her whole *tournure* the complete characteristic of what she really was,—a beautiful flirt, and a *very fast* young lady.

Oh, that any British maiden should unblushingly, nay, and without the slightest feeling of shame, even glory in such a title!

But so it is, in the year 1861.

At least so we hear, and read, and occasionally see; but this our present story was commenced a year or two ago, before

the new race of "fast young ladies" had appeared upon the London boards.

We in our ignorance know nothing of the pretty horsebreakers and their novel proceedings, we only talk of what we have heard, and have with our eyes beheld; and it is our present province to tell of an unfortunate girl who some few years ago gloried in the name of "*fast*," and whose fast ways are here with truth recorded.

But we must revert for a moment to the period when Car Eversfield, urged and prompted by her baneful confidante and adviser, the French woman, Louise, left her aunt's house, and threw herself upon the protection of Lord Glendinnon. We must, however, do him the justice to state that he had in no way encouraged or contemplated such a finale to his unprincipled and merely *pour passer le temps* flirtation; indeed at that moment he had "other fish to fry," — and it was rather a shock to his Lordship's nerves, when on returning to his house at a

late hour the night of Car's elopement from South Street, he was informed by the porter a lady was awaiting him in the library; and on his entering that apartment was met no longer by the vivacious Car, but by a weeping, distracted Niobe, who, throwing herself on her knees, implored him to befriend, to protect her. She looked most attractive even then, transformed as she was, with her dark hair streaming in disorder around her pale face, and tears falling from those lustrous eyes; the words of ardent love which the wretched girl, noting her before passionate adorer's surprised and rather disapproving expression, now poured forth, calling to mind how that love had been her ruin, and if he now cast her off, her only alternative must be utter destruction.

We will not describe this scene.

It is doubly repellent to think of such depravity of mind in a girl nurtured in an atmosphere of purity—the child of parents *sans reproche*. We will only add that Lord Glendinnon was not a man strong

enough to resist the advances, the words of admiring love and passion issuing from the rosy lips of a beautiful woman; and one, moreover, whom he greatly admired. And yet even he, with all his bold daring, shrank with something like dismay when he thought of the father of this tempting Circe—that man, so excellent, so honourable, even respected by the vicious profligate who was about to destroy his happiness for ever. We already know the sequel, and how, for the sake of that father, Lord Glendinning made the only reparation in his power, by marrying the fallen girl, the very moment that his wife's death rendered the act feasible.

Car's future life is soon told. She was now Lord Glendinning's wife; and, with that title, soon, ah, how soon! she whose love was still at its very height, found how short-lived was her power over the blasé affections of him for whom she had sacrificed her every hope in this world. She

had indeed been the toy of a moment, cast off as valueless before she had half awakened from her dream of bliss.

Car had only possessed, in Lord Glendinnon's eyes, the charm of freshness and youth; and even while he regarded her as unattainable, his vanity had been flattered by her undisguised admiration of himself.

She had no qualifications of mind, no tact nor cleverness, to attach him to her, or to render endurable the chains of matrimony. She was bound to him for life most certainly. His wife now, she might perhaps become the mother of his heir — and an heir would without doubt be desirable, as he hated his present probable successor. But soon he deemed Car too shallow a fool to claim much of his attention.

"Fool as she is, however," he thought, "she is unfortunately my wife; and a slippery hand she has always been; so we must put a curb upon her at once, and a pretty severe one, too, or she will soon be at her old pranks again — for, though she

is a fool, like most fools, she is not deficient in cunning."

And Car soon found her wings effectually clipped. Lord Glendinnon's first act was to dismiss Mademoiselle Louise, and himself to engage an elderly Abigail of unimpeachable reputation — a stern, unbending-looking woman — to wait upon his lady, who soon began to learn that she had no alternative — her sole chance of peace, or of a word or look approaching to kindness — but absolute submission and obedience to her husband's iron rule.

The worst of men are often the most exacting as to the conduct of their female belongings, most particularly of their wives.

Again, his Lordship's peculiar feeling of respect towards her father, operated so far in Car's favour as to gain for her every demonstration of at least outward consideration. Everything that money could procure was at her command; but did this, in the slightest degree, help to fill up the void

of a lonely existence, a lonely heart?—she, the daughter of a large, united, happy family.

All intercourse with her home was entirely at an end, and Lord Glendinnon's family were equally estranged—they had ever looked upon him with marked disapprobation, and this last act had strengthened their alienation from a relative whose career had ever been systematically degenerate.

And at home the unfortunate girl's name was blotted out from amongst them.

Could it be forgotten that it was her conduct which had expedited the death of the mother, the wife?—so precious to them all.

The broken-hearted father, trembling at the horrible idea that the same blood as the recreant Car's flowed equally in the veins of his other daughters, seemed haunted by a morbid terror lest any of his now seemingly innocent girls might turn out second editions of their wretched sister.

Every heart sympathised in the deep

grief and humiliation of this man, who stood so high in the estimation of all who knew him, from his sovereign to the humblest individual. Something must be done to rouse him from his present state of despondency.

An appointment of the highest grade in India at this moment fell vacant, and was immediately offered to him, but in the first instance resolutely refused.

It was, however, his gentle daughter Geraldine who at length persuaded him to retract his determination, and avail himself of the high consideration so graciously shown towards him.

"Dearest father," she urged, "go to India; you require change of scene, and engrossing occupation."

"Would you have me leave all my motherless children, Geraldine?" he exclaimed, in angry surprise.

"Yes; it is for their sakes that I would implore you to go," Geraldine answered firmly. "The appointment is only for five

years; and, dear father, you may leave your children safely with me and Aunt Jane, who has offered to live with us, and would add to our comfort and respectability by her presence. Yes, I will act a mother's part by all your children, darling father; and, though I am young, you know you can, and always have, trusted me. You ought not, in justice to your large family, to refuse such a post of emolument, as well as of distinction; and Albert wishes so much to accompany you — remember how beneficial it will be for him. Yes, father, you must go!"

And finally the General went, and Miss Eversfield, who truly loved her brother, and her niece Geraldine, thought little of the sacrifice of giving up her snug little house in South Street, and taking up her abode at Everslee; but she was amply rewarded by the pleasure she enjoyed in the society of her nieces and nephews, and in admiring the praiseworthy conduct of the young mistress of the house, GERAL-

dine, who did, indeed, prove herself a mother to the large family committed to her charge.

The younger Eversfields were all well disposed, quiet girls, not one partaking of the nature of the poor black sheep, Car. They were all gentle and good ; and none of them, though ladylike and pleasant to look upon, the least approaching to beauties ; certainly not possessing the flashing loveliness of their elder sister.

Some of the boys, however, reminded the aunt and Geraldine of one who, with all her misdeeds, could not but be remembered with the sharpest pangs at their tender hearts ; and often has a flashing eye, a rosy lip, a saucy ringing laugh, from one of the little boys, caused Mrs. Nelson, the nurse, to hurry from the room to hide sobs and tears which would burst forth at the thoughts of another nursling, still so fondly loved, now worse than dead to them all.

* * * * *

And now a few words more about Car, and our story is told. Yes, as we view her, from our retired pew, we mark the ravages circumstances have wrought upon a face that once looked as if sorrow and sickness never could rest upon it.

But she is a neglected, uncared-for wife, and alien from her old home and its associations, and from all her old dear ties. She wears the trappings of prosperity, and envies the very beggars in the street for their independence and freedom from restraint. Her health, once so perfect, is impaired ; she never recovered from a fearful illness after the birth of a dead son.

From that time her beauty seemed gone, at least those adjuncts to its brilliancy, her fine complexion, the roundness of contour, and the bright, sparkling glance ; now in the dull though agitated glance of her eyes, we can trace an agonizing expression, as if fain would she catch one single look of some longed-for object ; yes, of something or somebody for which she panted ;

as the rich man in torment longed for the drop of water to cool his burning tongue.

Car was indeed forlorn ; she had not a friend to whom she could speak, and pour forth her griefs. Time may work changes, but her disgraceful story, even after years had elapsed, was still fresh in every one's memory.

It was one of too flagrant a nature to be soon forgotten even in these days, when certainly we often see vice walking triumphant and unabashed in society.

But this case could not be *easily* forgotten in the highest quarters ; there was a stern reprobation of Lord Glendinnon and his wife, which set its seal on any truce that might have been made by the great world with the offenders.

All this was most chafing to the proud spirit of Lord Glendinnon, and more and more alienated him from the partner of his sin and folly ; and as those he would have desired as associates for his wife kept pertinaciously aloof, and the few less scrupulous

and less desirable in all ways, who would have gladly availed themselves of the advantages of a good house, luxurious table, and all the accessories of rank and a princely fortune, gained no admission within the stately walls of Lord Glendinning's mansions—so Car was wholly companionless. But we must now leave her to her destiny; trusting that there may still come a time when she may have peace; and that even at evening time there may be light.

Yes —

“Light at the evening time;
Oh, blessed hope! when on the waters dark
Faith's straining eye can scarce discern the ark,
And the poor dove, in weary flight around,
No olive branch has found.”

THE END.

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